The Study Of Military Loanwords In Uzbek Linguistics

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Abstract: The development of military terminology in the Uzbek language reflects the complex historical, political, and cultural interactions of Central Asia. Throughout centuries of contact with Persian, Arabic, Russian, and later Western powers, Uzbek has incorporated numerous military loanwords that mirror the region's socio-political evolution. This paper examines the linguistic study of military loanwords in Uzbek linguistics, analyzing their etymological sources, adaptation processes, and semantic integration. Drawing from theoretical perspectives on borrowing and lexical semantics, it investigates how Uzbek linguists have categorized, interpreted, and standardized these terms. The findings highlight that the study of military borrowings not only contributes to understanding linguistic change but also offers insights into national identity, modernization, and historical memory.

Keywords: Historical memory, understanding linguistic change, categorized, interpreted, and standardized.

Introduction: Language is both a repository of history and a mirror of cultural exchange. The lexicon of any language, particularly its specialized vocabulary, carries traces of contact with other linguistic and cultural systems. In the context of the Uzbek language, military terminology represents one of the richest areas of lexical borrowing. As wars, conquests, and political alliances shaped Central Asia, the Uzbek military lexicon absorbed elements from various languages, including Arabic, Persian, Russian, and more recently, English.

The study of military loanwords in Uzbek linguistics offers valuable insights into both language development and national identity formation. Uzbek scholars have examined how foreign military terms entered the language, were phonetically and semantically adapted, and later standardized through linguistic reforms. The purpose of this paper is to explore these processes and

to present an overview of how Uzbek linguistics approaches the study of military borrowings from a semantic, etymological, and sociolinguistic perspective.

Theoretical Background

Loanwords, also called borrowings, are lexical units adopted from one language into another. According to Haugen (1950), borrowing involves both linguistic and cultural transfer, where foreign words are integrated into the receiving language's phonological and morphological systems. Military borrowings are particularly frequent due to the universal nature of warfare and the constant exchange of technology and strategy among nations.

In Uzbek linguistics, the study of loanwords began to develop systematically in the 20th century, particularly after the formation of the Uzbek literary language. Researchers such as A. G'ulomov, Sh. Rahmatullayev, and M. Mirtojiev emphasized the semantic and morphological adaptation of borrowed words, including those from the military domain. Modern linguistic research also integrates semantic field theory, examining how loanwords form part of larger conceptual networks, such as hierarchy, strategy, weaponry, and discipline.

Historical Overview of Military Borrowings in Uzbek

The military lexicon of Uzbek reflects distinct historical layers of influence:

Arabic and Persian Influence (9th–15th centuries)

The earliest layer of military terminology entered Uzbek through Arabic and Persian during the Islamic expansion and the rule of various dynasties in Central Asia. Words such as lashkar (army), sipoh (soldier), jang (battle), and askari (military) originated from Persian and Arabic. These terms not only carried technical meanings but also acquired cultural and symbolic significance, often appearing in poetry and chronicles.

Turkic and Mongolic Influence

Parallel to Persian and Arabic influences, the Turkic-speaking military tradition contributed indigenous terminology such as qo'shin (troops), botir (hero), and jangchi (warrior). The Mongol conquests further enriched the lexicon with terms like noyon (commander) and tuman (division of ten thousand soldiers). These layers demonstrate how Turkic and Mongolic traditions blended with Islamic and Persian military culture.

Russian and Soviet Influence (19th–20th centuries)

The most significant wave of military loanwords entered Uzbek during the Russian Empire and Soviet Union periods. Russian became the primary source of terminology related to modern military organization, technology, and strategy. Words such as polk (regiment), tank, komandir, general, and ofitser were borrowed directly or through phonetic adaptation.

Uzbek linguists in the Soviet era, such as Sh. Rahmatullayev and N. Mahmudov, analyzed the semantic adaptation of these terms and their integration into the Uzbek lexical system. The 20th century also witnessed extensive terminological planning, as military vocabulary was standardized through official dictionaries and educational materials.

English Influence (Late 20th – 21st centuries)

After Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, new military and technological cooperation with Western nations introduced English-based terminology. Terms like radar, drone, cyberwarfare, and special forces entered the Uzbek language, often through Russian or directly from English. These loanwords reflect global technological trends and the modernization of defense systems.

Semantic Adaptation of Military Loanwords

Semantic adaptation is a central topic in the study of military borrowings. Borrowed words undergo semantic narrowing, broadening, or shift depending on their function in the new linguistic environment.

For example, the Persian lashkar originally meant "army," but in modern Uzbek, it has become archaic and poetic, while armiya (from Russian армия) is the dominant term. Similarly, jang (battle) and urush (war) coexist with subtle semantic distinctions—urush implies a large-scale war, whereas jang may denote a smaller battle or combat situation.

Some Russian borrowings have undergone semantic broadening: komanda (team, command) now applies not only to the military but also to sports and organizational contexts. This demonstrates how military terms can extend into general usage through metaphorical transfer.

Linguistic Classification and Research Approaches

Uzbek linguists classify military borrowings based on several criteria:

1. Etymological source (Arabic, Persian, Russian, English).

2. Morphological adaptation (phonetic assimilation, suffixation, or hybrid formation).

3. Semantic function (denoting rank, weapon, strategy, or institution).

4. Functional domain (formal military language vs. colloquial or metaphorical use).

Research in Uzbek linguistics has also employed

contrastive analysis to study parallels between Uzbek and donor languages. For instance, comparative works have analyzed how Russian ofitser corresponds to Uzbek ofitser (loanword) versus native harbiy xizmatchi (literally "military servant"), reflecting stylistic and sociolinguistic nuances.

Contemporary linguists increasingly apply cognitive and sociolinguistic frameworks, viewing military borrowings as symbols of modernization and global integration rather than mere linguistic imports.

Sociolinguistic and Cultural Aspects

Military borrowings in Uzbek not only serve linguistic functions but also reflect sociopolitical dynamics. During the Soviet period, Russian military terminology symbolized authority and centralization. After independence, efforts were made to de-Russify certain terms and revive native equivalents. For example, harbiy akademiya replaced voennaya akademiya, and qo'mondon is often preferred over komandir.

This linguistic shift represents a broader trend of cultural reorientation toward Turkic and Islamic heritage. However, Russian and English borrowings remain dominant in technical and international contexts, illustrating the diglossic nature of military terminology in modern Uzbek.

Military loanwords also appear in Uzbek media and literature, often carrying metaphorical meaning. Words like jang, front, and g'alaba ("victory") are used symbolically in political speeches and sports commentary, demonstrating semantic extension beyond their original military scope.

Challenges and Perspectives in Uzbek Linguistics

Despite significant research, several challenges remain in the study of military loanwords:

•   Standardization: Competing forms (komandir vs. qo'mondon, general vs. sardor) coexist in official and colloquial registers.

•   Corpus limitation: Comprehensive dictionaries of military terminology are limited, and new English-based terms lack unified translation.

•   Semantic ambiguity: Some borrowed terms overlap semantically with native equivalents, leading to stylistic inconsistency.

Future research in Uzbek linguistics should focus on creating bilingual corpora, analyzing semantic networks of military vocabulary, and documenting diachronic changes in meaning. Collaboration with computational linguistics could further enhance the classification and standardization of military terminology.

CONCLUSION

The study of military loanwords in Uzbek linguistics reveals a rich tapestry of historical contact, political transformation, and linguistic creativity. Each layer of borrowing—from Arabic and Persian to Russian and English—represents a distinct stage in the region's socio-political evolution.

Uzbek linguists have approached these borrowings through etymological, semantic, and sociolinguistic analysis, emphasizing their role in shaping both professional and everyday language.

Military loanwords serve as linguistic witnesses to Uzbekistan's cultural interactions and modernization. Understanding their semantics and adaptation processes not only deepens our knowledge of Uzbek lexical development but also illustrates the broader dynamics of language contact in Central Asia.

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