



STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF TURKISMS IN ENGLISH DICTIONARIES

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Abstract: This paper explores how words of Turkic origin—often referred to as *Turkisms*—have become integrated into English, particularly through lexicographic sources. It focuses on organizing these borrowings into small-scale (micro) and broader thematic groups (macro), while also examining the ways their meanings have evolved. Drawing from major English dictionaries, the study maps out both the structural adaptation of these terms and their semantic developments. Notable examples discussed include *caïque*, *caracul*, *cassock*, and *dolma*, offering insight into how such terms entered English and what they reveal about cross-cultural contact.

Keywords: Turkisms, lexicographic sources, semantic, cross-cultural contact, Turkic-derived terms.

Introduction. English, shaped over centuries by interactions with other languages and peoples, has adopted numerous foreign words, including a notable group from Turkic languages. These Turkic-derived terms entered English through various historical channels such as trade routes, diplomatic exchanges, and military encounters, particularly during periods of sustained contact with the Ottoman Empire.

This research delves into how these Turkisms are structured within English lexicographic sources, classifying them into thematic and micro-groups and tracing the relationships among their meanings. It aims to demonstrate how linguistic borrowing is not just about vocabulary expansion, but also about cultural transmission and adaptation.

Methodology. A qualitative analysis was conducted using a selected corpus of English dictionaries, including:

- *The Oxford English Dictionary*
- *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*
- *Collins English Dictionary*
- *Chambers Dictionary*

From these sources, Turkisms were identified and examined in terms of origin, context, and usage. Each term was analyzed within its semantic



domain—such as clothing, food, architecture, etc.—to detect thematic patterns. The classification model follows frameworks used in earlier thematic studies, like those applied to the *Kutadgu Bilig*, a medieval Turkic text known for its structured vocabulary. The data shows that Turkic-origin words in English naturally group into thematic categories, reflecting the kinds of cultural exchanges in which they were embedded:

1. Food and Culinary Items

Words like *dolma*, *caviar*, and *casaba* (a type of melon) have entered English largely through cultural adoption of cuisine. While some, like *dolma*, have retained their original meanings, others, like *caviar*, have acquired new connotations (e.g., from simple preserved roe to a luxury delicacy).

2. Clothing and Textiles

Borrowings such as *cassock*, *caftan*, and *choga* reveal influences in attire and textiles. Often these terms originated from Ottoman or Central Asian garments and were later adopted into English with minimal changes in meaning.

3. Architecture and Furniture

Items like *divan* and *yurt* are indicative of how Turkic domestic and architectural concepts entered English. The meanings of these terms usually reflect their original forms, though sometimes with localized adaptation.

4. Social and Political Concepts

Terms such as *devshirmeh* (a levy system under the Ottomans), *dey* (a title for rulers in North Africa), and *dolmus* (a shared taxi or minibus) point to deeper sociopolitical imports. Their presence in English reflects both practical interactions and historical documentation.

These words often experienced semantic changes once integrated into English. For instance, *harem* initially described a private female quarter in a household but later took on Orientalist and exotic connotations in Western discourse.

Discussion. The presence of Turkisms in English dictionaries underlines the broader processes of cultural and linguistic interaction. The formation of thematic and micro-categories aids in understanding not just the vocabulary itself, but the societal aspects these terms reflect—such as how English speakers understood Turkish clothing, cuisine, or governance. Furthermore, semantic shifts often reveal how the cultural lens of the receiving language interprets foreign concepts. For example, the term *bashi-bazouk*, originally a military role, eventually came to be used in English literature as a synonym for disorder or lawlessness. This reinterpretation shows how borrowed terms can evolve based on new sociocultural narratives. Lexicographic sources prove invaluable in tracing this evolution. They offer detailed etymologies, usage



examples, and historical contexts, allowing researchers to map the journey of words like *chiaus* (an Ottoman messenger) or *caramoussal* (a type of boat) from their native usage to modern English.

Conclusion. The incorporation of Turkisms into English is more than a linguistic curiosity—it is evidence of historical contact and cultural exchange. By organizing these words into thematic and micro-level groups and exploring their semantic transformations, we gain a clearer picture of how languages adapt and influence one another over time. The results affirm the role of dictionaries as both linguistic records and cultural documents. Through lexicographic study, we uncover the subtle ways that borrowed words carry with them traces of history, identity, and shifting meaning.

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