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The Structure of Language Units in Rootword Niches of the Kipchak Group of Turkic Languages

Abstract

This paper interrogates the structure of language units in rootword niches of the Kipchak group of Turkic languages and, for this purpose, tackles several facts. Generally, scholars have not properly settled the initial structure of the root morphemes in Turkic languages, making it one of the most controversial issues in related literature. Linguists, especially Turkologists, agree that the structure of word roots in agglutinative languages is more clear and transparent than that of fusional or inflected languages. When determining the structure of word roots in the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, it is necessary to consider the semantic features of the word along with its phonological and morphonological properties, which sometimes receive no attention. After considering all scientific debates and disagreements related to this topic, the paper concludes that the development of the semantic structure of word roots in Turkic languages has been from general to specific, from abstract to concrete. We have explained the issues related to this claim using examples.

Keywords: Kipchak group of Turkic languages, word root, structure, propositions

Kıpçak Grubu Türk Dillerinin Kök Sözcük Nişlerindeki Dil Birimlerinin Yapısı

Öz

Bu makale, Türk dillerinin Kıpçak grubunun kök sözcük nişlerindeki dil birimlerinin yapısını sorgulamakta ve bu amaçla çeşitli olguları ele almaktadır. Genel olarak, bilim insanları Türk dillerindeki kök morfeplerin başlangıç yapısını tam olarak çözememişlerdir ve bu da onu ilgili



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literatürdeki en tartışmalı konulardan biri haline getirmiştir. Dilbilimciler, özellikle de Türkologlar, eklemeli dillerdeki kelime köklerinin yapısının kaynaşmalı veya çekimli dillerdekinden daha açık ve şeffaf olduğu konusunda hemfikirdir. Türk dillerinin Kıpçak grubunda kelime köklerinin yapısını belirlerken, kelimenin anlamsal özelliklerinin yanı sıra bazen hiç dikkat edilmeyen fonolojik ve morfolojik özelliklerini de göz önünde bulundurmak gerekir. Bu konuyla ilgili tüm bilimsel tartışmaları ve anlaşmazlıkları ele aldıktan sonra, makale, Türk dillerinde kelime köklerinin anlamsal yapısının gelişiminin genelden özele, soyuttan somuta doğru olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır. Bu iddiayla ilgili konuları örneklerle açıkladık.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kıpçak grubu Türk dilleri, kelime kökü, yapı, önermeler

Introduction

The initial structure of root morphemes is considered one of the most controversial issues in turkological studies. Turkologists assert that the structure of word roots pertaining to agglutinative languages is more clear and transparent than that of fusional or inflected languages; however, when we approach this issue from a diachronic perspective, this transparency is not that obvious. Research on the word roots of Turkic languages shows that this topic is important and current in Turkic language studies. However, the debate over the structure of root words, specifically verb roots, remains unresolved, with varying opinions in this field. For instance, not all Turkologists endorse the notion that Turkic languages possess monosyllabic verb roots that culminate in a vowel, i.e., initial verb roots that take the form of consonant + vowel (CV), a concept that remains unresolved and rife with controversy. After comparing Turkish and Mongolian languages, a group of turkologists (V. L. Kotviç) from the comparison of Turkish and Mongolian languages concludes that in Turkic languages the structure of word roots could be in different forms. They assert that Turkic languages exhibit a variety of structural forms, ranging from simple and monosyllabic root structures (V, VC, CV) to the most complex polysyllabic root structures (CVC, CVCC). On the other hand, some other turkologists (H. Vamberi, V. V. Radlov, N. A. Baskakov, etc.) claim that only monosyllabic word root structures (CVC) can be considered as specific word roots of the Turkic languages. Scholars who support this idea believe that the only historical formation of word roots can be in the form of consonant + vowel + consonant (CVC). They absolutely reject the possibility of the availability of a primordial monosyllabic root ending in a vowel in Turkic languages.

There is a lack of research on the structure of root words in Turkic languages, including the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, in Azerbaijani linguistics. However, Russian turkologists have addressed this topic to a certain extent in their research works, and some of them hold controversial views on the subject. Scholars like S. Alizade, B. Khalilov, G.

Kazimov, and B. Maharramli stand out among the Azerbaijani researchers who have expressed their views on this subject. This paper mentions many such scholars' views and compares them. In general, given the lack of research on root word niches in the Kipchak group of Turkic languages in Azerbaijani linguistics, it is necessary to systematically approach this topic and conduct detailed research.

The purpose of this research paper is to more thoroughly study and learn the structure of root word niches in the Kipchak group of Turkic languages. For these purposes, a number of tasks have been set and fulfilled in this paper. First of all, it reviews the views about the structure of word roots in the ancient Turkic languages and makes comparisons among them. Then it investigates the structure of the word roots of the words that belong to the Kipchak group of Turkic languages. After discussing the controversial point on this topic, it tries to come to a more precise conclusion.

The research has taken into consideration the work of turkologists from around the world, including Azerbaijan. We studied and analyzed materials from these sources in a comparative manner, organizing them into a systematic order. The research employed methods such as material collection and summarization, the historical-comparative method, and systematization-based analysis.

1. Structure of Word Roots in Ancient Turkic Languages

One of the first fundamental research works dedicated to the root morphemes of Turkic languages, including the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, is Yunusaliyev's "Kyrgyz Lexicology" (development of root words). The turkologist tackles different language issues in his book, such as dead roots, new words derived from them, homonyms, and others. In his book, the author examines the evolution of word roots and posits that these variations stem from internal factors like language development (morphology, syntax, and semantics) and external factors like the language's realization environment (economy, culture, etc.). According to Yunusaliyev, if word roots did not develop in connection with grammar, there would have only been monosyllabic word roots. For example, sa (to count), ba (to tie), ka (to cover), and other similar monosyllabic word roots would have remained in this form, and there would not have been any different words in the language (Yunusaliyev, 1959, p. 12). From what the turkologist says, it is possible to conclude that according to him, the primordial structure of the word roots in the Kipchak group Turkic languages was in the form of consonant + vowel (CV).

In his previously mentioned book, Yunusaliyev also emphasizes the importance of considering the following factors when determining the primordial word roots of the Altai languages:

- The evolution of the phonetic composition of the word root through history;
- Semantic changes occurred in the word root;
- the possibility of expansion in the root due to the dead grammatical formats after a certain period;
- Possibility of derivational change in agglutinative affixes;
- Vowel reduction and consonant drop by adding affixes, as well as the formation of a vowel in the last consonant of the word root and the first consonant of the affix;
- Possible semantic variations in the historically composed word roots;
- Syntactic combination of two word roots of historically composed roots (Yunusaliyev, 1959, p. 38).

Yunusaliyev classifies the structure of word roots belonging to ancient dialects of Turkic languages into four types: 1) vowel (V): u – sleep, o – to think; 2) consonant + vowel (CV): sa – to count, sı – to break; 3) vowel + consonant (VC): at – to throw, as – to hang, ap – animal; 4) consonant + vowel + consonant (CVC): gel – to come, suq – water, daq – mountain, get – to leave (Yunusaliyev, 1959, p. 51).

Baskakov, talking about the structure of word roots in Kipchak group Turkic languages in his book *Nogai Language and Its Dialects* (1940), writes that the Nogai language consists of monosyllabic word roots (consonant + vowel + consonant, vowel + consonant). Word roots made up of a vowel or consonant + vowel combination also pertain to the above-mentioned forms. The Turkologist, further expanding his ideas in his other works, concludes that the structure of word roots in Turkic languages is consonant + vowel + consonant (CVC). Baskakov asserts that this word root structure, the most ancient in Turkic languages, serves as the foundation for other word roots (Baskakov, 1952, p. 100). To demonstrate the process of dropping the first consonant in the root of the word in the later stages, he presents the following examples: bol-ol, yat-at, jağaç-ağaç, etc.

From the provided account, we can infer that the transformation of three-phonemic monosyllabic roots and stems into two-phonemic roots in Turkic languages does not necessarily mean that the ancient Turkic word roots had a consonant + vowel + consonant (CVC) structure. Kaydarov, who writes on this topic in his work, asserts that it is not correct to definitively state the issue of the ideal and exclusive position of monosyllabic roots. If we consider what has been said until now about the structure of word roots in Turkic as well as in the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, we can agree with Kaydarov on this issue. Firstly, because the variations and shifts in the structure or formation of the word roots, as already mentioned, are diverse and

multidirectional, the CVC-type structure of the word root can be converted both theoretically and practically into CV or VC form. However, this process may occur in the backward direction; that is, the structure of the word root can return from CV and VC formation to CVC. On each particular occasion, this conversion can occur for different reasons. Secondly, any change in the structure of the root morphemes, whether towards expansion or reduction, as is known, is the result of completely natural phonomorphological factors that have manifested themselves throughout the historical development of Turkic languages.

Baskakov's idea about the word roots of the Turkic languages, including the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, is significant for two reasons. On the one hand, the results of those studies can serve as a starting point for researchers to start their research or as a conclusion they can reach. On the other hand, this idea is interesting in the sense that it reflects such aspects of the studied problem as the structure and structural types of monosyllables, primary and secondary roots, internal changes, and phonomorphological factors. As is known, it was Radlov who, for the first time, put forward the idea that the structure of word roots in the Turkic languages is in the form of CV. In his writing written in 1906 called "Initial thoughts on the description of the morphology of Turkic languages" («Вводные мысли к описанию морфологии тюркских языков»), he gave information about the theory of combining the morphological elements of the Turkic word. This theory was the outcome of long, successful studies carried out on the Orkhon-Yenisei and ancient Uygur monuments, deciphered at the end of the last century, as well as the languages of the small Turkic peoples of Siberia.

When comparing the data obtained from the monuments and languages of small nations with a long historical development, it can be seen that the words belonging to the Turkic language group have "grown" throughout history; that is, as V.V. Radlov says, affixes have combined with the base and actively spread among themselves to form new affixes that cause similar combinations. To justify his claim, the turkologist provides several examples. According to him, the word *baq-pak* (tie) has been formed by adding the -k suffix to the verb root "ba" (to tie) ("Kutadgu Bilik").

As noted by many scholars and researchers dealing with this problem, the peculiarity of words and word roots in Turkic languages has forced the researchers dealing with this problem to stop understanding it as a simple and somewhat simplified concept. Thus, there are still no precise and concrete views on the structural formation of the word roots in Turkic languages. In Turkic languages, the structure of a word is made up of two elements: the base and the ending, and the base is made up of a root, which is known as an integral and indivisible part of the word.

2. The Structure of Word Roots in the Kipchak Group of Turkic Languages

One can find different views in Baskakov's propositions regarding the structure of root word niches in Turkic languages, including Kipchak group Turkic languages. The Turkologist notes that when the root of the word combines with affixes that form a lexical-grammatical word, it creates the first base, and when it combines with affixes that form a functional-grammatical word, it forms the second base. In other words, the morphological structure of words related to Turkic languages can have two types of bases: primary and secondary. In both cases, the root must be present as an essential element.

A new step in the study of the structure of Turkic language words is the discovery that the base acts differently depending on the primary and secondary functions of word-forming affixes. This is because the base is different from the root. Musayev, adopting a different approach in terms of the development of the root structure, states in his work that a word in the Karaim language can morphologically consist of either a single base or a base and word-modifying forms. On the other hand, the base can consist of either a single root, which is an undivided part, or a root and a word-creating morpheme (Musayev, 1984, p. 86). According to the researchers' fair approach, this explanation, which reflects the modern standard of theoretical evaluation of the structure of the word root, expresses its essence more than other definitions. Kaydarov writes that the root, which is a fixed sound complex of the word or bases that constitute the foundation of the lexicon, is, although considered an indivisible part in the diachronic plan, also a part that is divisible into morphological parts (Kaydarov, 1986, p. 285). Regarding views on the antiquity of word roots, it is possible to accept those scientists who assert that the word roots in Turkic languages can have multiple formations, including V, CV, VC, CVC, and CVCC, rather than having only one type of structure formation. All these structure formations or types were primarily found in language in the form of imitational words and exclamations. These words, which are widely known, constitute the most stable and unchanging stratum of the vocabulary and cannot be seen as words derived from other word roots.

The current Kipchak group of Turkic languages has approximately 6,000 monosyllabic root words, with half of them being non-independent units. At the same time, these languages also have many bisyllabic units that are of various origins. In turkological studies, these bisyllabic units are considered root words. It appears that in order to know the number of monosyllabic word roots in the Turkic languages, it is first necessary to more precisely identify

bisyllabic units. Moreover, it should be identified whether these units are originally bisyllabic or tuned bisyllabic as a result of the lexical-semantic development of those languages.

Most Turkologists who study the structure of words in Turkish languages, with different excuses, emphasize that monosyllabic roots serve as the foundation of the root word lexicon, which, purely logically, provides a certain place for two-syllabic and polysyllabic roots in the root dictionary system. The researchers correctly point out that scientists must use these excuses for a variety of objective reasons. The lack of thorough examination of the extensive range of material regarding both existing and extinct Turkic languages is one explanation for the insufficient knowledge about the structure of root morphemes. The fact that the original Turkish morpheme structure is monosyllabic defines the prevailing beliefs, while subsequent agglutinative development presents two-syllable roots as bases.

B. Maharramli too touches upon this matter in his work called “Ancient Lexicon of Turkic Languages.” The author, after presenting the viewpoints of Turkologists regarding this subject, subsequently arrives at the conclusion that the original structure of word units in Turkic languages followed a consonant+vowel (CV) pattern. In order to back up his argument, he referenced several CV-shaped word roots found in ancient Turkic sources as examples in his work. The author further highlights that this particular kind of word root is fossilized and preserved in several phrases in contemporary Turkic languages: *“Thus, the aforementioned facts once again demonstrate that morphemes containing consonant-vowel (CV) structures are among the most ancient root forms. Very few of them survive in contemporary Turkic languages. The development of those roots mainly resulted in non-semanticization and fusion. The majority of these roots are present in the composition of roots that are currently regarded as simple”* (Məhərrəmli, 2017, p. 153).

Another researcher, Shaikhulov, who presented his views on the structure of word roots in Turkic languages, including the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, based on the research conducted by numerous Turkologists, categorized them into the following categories:

- The first category of word roots consists of single-element words containing only one vowel, which are likely derived from more complicated word roots.
- The second category includes roots consisting of two elements. (According to various authors, this kind is considered either simpler due to the addition of affixes or more complex due to the omission of the beginning or final element.) The author presents two root structures for the roots related to this category: VC (vowel+consonant) and CV (consonant+vowel).

- The third category consists of three-element word roots with two subtypes: 1) CVC—We form some of these roots by adding affixes to the two-element type. 2) CVV—The addition of affixes to CV word roots probably created some of these types of roots.
- The fourth type is assigned four-element word roots, which are of one type (CVCC). As Musayev noted, the majority of these roots are represented by imitative (sound and image) words (Shaykhlov, 2016, p. 272).

Thus, the splitting ability of monosyllabic root stems in Turkic languages of the Kipchak group is, on the one hand, a real fact, as stated by V. V. Radlov in the past. On the other hand, a root that is seen as uncomplicated within a specific linguistic period may be regarded as complex in the preceding period. Similarly, a word that is perceived as a compound unit in the present stage of evolution may be viewed as straightforward and indivisible in the subsequent stage. In any case, a monosyllabic root is frequently a wave-like rehearsal of agglutination processes, according to Yunusaliyev.

This raises a discussion regarding the actual feasibility of breaking root bases into suitable lexical-grammatical parts or envisioning such a possibility in theory. However, it is wrong to assume that all monosyllabic word roots have a derivative structure, as A. T. Kaydarov pointed out. It is obvious that the divisibility or indivisibility of words is determined by the presence or absence of independent or non-independent monosyllabic word roots that are typical of them. In this regard, three main issues should be taken into consideration. First, if when we say “independence” in the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, it means their functional autonomy, the transparency of their morphological structure, and their readiness to multiply at any moment of life, etc., then it can be said that in all Turkic languages, including the Turkic languages of the Kipchak group, about two-thirds of the total possible number of these units have such characteristics. Secondly, if we regard these words as monosyllabic units that constitute the active lexicon of the Turkic language, we can classify this category as genuinely autonomous. Lastly, it is essential to disregard the remaining portion of the lexicon consisting of word roots that were once present in the language but now function only inside established word combinations, including derivative words.

The word roots in Turkic languages of the Kipchak group can be classified as either independent or non-independent, and this classification is connected to their fixed and free characteristics. As is known, many turkologists who study word roots in Turkic languages regard them as fixed or stable. Nevertheless, if we see the “stability” of monosyllabic roots in terms of their structural stability, immutability, and consistent preservation of their

morphological form or sound appearance, it becomes evident that they lack these traits at the level of the Turkish language. Additionally, Kaydarov pointed out that speaking of word roots in Turkish languages exposes us to more dynamic and ever-changing linguistic units. (Kaydarov, 1986, p. 250).

When determining the structure of word roots in Turkic languages, such as the Kipchak group of Turkic languages, it is crucial to consider not only the phonological and morphonological aspects of words but also their semantic characteristics. However, sometimes researchers ignore or do not give much attention to this essential aspect. When discussing the structure of word roots, it is essential to consider semantic aspects. The semantic aspect of the lexical units of Turkic languages, particularly the roots, is an important factor. The semantic trait that enables us to ascertain the temporal aspects of word roots in Turkic languages is crucial.

In this regard, Turkologists, considering the problems with the semantic structure of the root, try to learn the degree of stability or variability, which is directly related to its nature, depending on the conditions of useage. When analyzing the mentioned issues, two perspectives emerge. One perspective asserts that monosyllabic word roots have stable, independent, and concrete semantics. The other perspective, however, does not definitively support the idea of the unchanging and stable nature of the root bases that have already been studied. The material gathered from the Turkic languages of the Kipchak group indicates that there is a consistent pattern of semantic change in monosyllabic word roots. This pattern, which involves the formation of subtle variations or significant alterations in meaning, can be found in all periods and throughout the historical evolution of these languages. However, as Kaydarov accurately pointed out, the semantic structure of monosyllabic root bases is more resistant to change than their phonomorphological organization. It is especially that that forms the solid foundation and unshakable basis of the vocabulary base, which constitutes the core and integrity of the Turkic language.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of other academics and our own research, it can be inferred that word roots, especially monosyllabic word root bases, remain in use, although their meaning may be eclipsed to varying extents. This occurrence is extremely frequent. From our perspective, it would be more accurate to consider the semantic characteristic of monosyllabic word roots that lack a separate lexical meaning alongside words that possess an independent lexical meaning in the Kipchak group of Turkic languages.

Having examined every scientific discussion and argument on the subject, we can say that the semantic structure of Turkish word roots has evolved from general to specific, or from abstract to concrete. The earliest roots were the embodiment of the concept, which developed semantically and structurally, materialized, became content-filled, and took on a particular lexical meaning. According to certain experts, the terms “kel” (to arrive), “ket” (to go), “kez” (to walk), “kesh” (to pass), “kash” (to run), “kir” (to enter), and others are believed to have a common root (ka, ke, ki) they originated from. These terms originally referred to human actions, sharing a common root. However, the semantic significance of these words evolved over time, leading to the formation of new words with distinct meanings.

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