

The Influence OF Turkisms ON THE Imagery OF THE Russian Language: The 'Metaphorical Density' Model

Bobo-Hojayeva Adolat Lutfillo qizi

Assistant in Almalyk branch of NUST MISiS, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Turkisms have significantly influenced the Russian lexicon, traditionally being studied from the perspective of chronology and the semantics of lexical borrowings. This article proposes a novel approach to assessing the integration of Turkisms that moves beyond mere frequency (active/passive vocabulary). We introduce the concept of “Metaphorical Density” (MD)—a metric that defines a Turkism's ability to generate new, figurative meanings and become the basis for stable phraseological units (PUs), metaphors, and idioms.

Keywords: Turkisms, lexical borrowings, metaphorical density, phraseologisms, integration, active vocabulary, imagery, corpus linguistics.

Introduction: Turkic languages exerted one of the most significant influences on the Russian lexicon, particularly during the periods of the Golden Horde and the active expansion of the Muscovite state (Shansky, 1965). However, most studies focus on the chronology and semantics of these borrowings (e.g., казна /kazna/—treasury, башмак /bashmak/—shoe, лошадь /loshad'/—horse).

The choice of a specific word in a communicative act, whether it's a native unit or a synonymous borrowing (e.g., a Turkism), is always dictated not only by its availability but also by extralinguistic factors. These factors ultimately adapt the word completely to the meaning being expressed and to the current reality (Sternin, 2012; Vinogradov, 1986). Thus, the semantic state of a word—its “obsolescence” or, conversely, its activity in everyday life—is directly reflected in its usage as a nomination.

That's a crucial distinction for your study! Here's the English translation for the next part of your introduction and the start of your methodology:

It is precisely for this reason that we have divided Turkisms into active and passive types, primarily based on the broad or narrow sphere of their application as nominations. We consider active Turkisms to be those that are frequent in both oral and written speech, are part of the core vocabulary of most native speakers,

and are regularly used in everyday communication (Shcherba, 1974).

We posit that the true measure of a borrowed word's integration into the recipient language is not merely its frequency (active/passive vocabulary), but also its ability to generate new, figurative meanings.

METHODOLOGY: Defining "Metaphorical Density"

Metaphorical Density (MD) is defined as the quantity and stability of derivative phraseological units (PUs), metaphors, and idioms formed on the basis of a Turkism.

$$MD = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (U_i \times C_{fig})}{F_{lex}}$$

there:

U_i — The Stability of the i -th phraseological unit (on a scale from 1 to 5).

C_{fig} — The Coefficient of Imagery (the degree of distance between the figurative meaning and the direct meaning).

F_{lex} — The Overall Lexical Frequency of the word (for normalization).

For the purposes of this article, a qualitative analysis of the data from the National Corpus of the Russian Language (NCRL) was used.

Classification of Turkisms according to the MD Model

Based on the analysis using corpus methods, Turkisms are divided into three key groups:

These are words that have moved beyond their original nominative function and have become powerful sources of imagery, often having lost their direct connection to the Turkic original.

1. Turkisms with High Metaphorical Density

Turkism (Origin)	Phraseological Units/Imagery	MD Analysis
Кафтан (cf. Turkic kaftan — clothing)	"Don't judge by another's caftan," "Caftan from someone else's shoulder"	The word has become a generalized symbol of social status and borrowed experience.
Казак (Turkic qazaq — free man, vagrant)	"Cossack circle," "Cossack freedom (volnitsa)"	The word has transformed into a symbol of freedom, belligerence, and a special order (not merely the nomination of a warrior).
Базар (Persian/Turkic bāzār)	"Bazaar-vokzal" (Bazaar-train station, meaning chaos), "Bazaar cursing/woman"	Shifted from "market" to denoting chaos, noise, and a low cultural level of communication.

2. Turkisms with Medium Metaphorical Density

These are words that are actively used in speech, but

whose metaphorical function is limited to one or two stable combinations.

Turkism (Origin)	Phraseological Units/Imagery	MD Analysis
Алмаз (Greek via Turkic)	"Diamond Fund," "Hard as a diamond"	Nomination for a precious stone, rarely used in metaphors except to denote exceptional hardness or value.
Арбуз (Turkic harbūz)	"Watermelon time" (season)	Almost exclusively a nominative function, minimally utilized in Russian idiomatic expressions.

3. Turkisms with Low Metaphorical Density

These are words whose function is almost exclusively

nominative (naming an object) and which have not generated significant phraseological units.

Turkism (Origin)	Phraseological Units/Imagery	MD Analysis
Кирпич (Turkic kerpiç)	Absence of stable metaphors.	Strictly a building material; imagery is absent.
Стакан (Turkic tostakan)	"Empty glass" (direct meaning)	Function of a container/vessel.
Утюг (Turkic ütüg)	Absence of stable metaphors.	Function of an instrument/tool.

CONCLUSION

The "Metaphorical Density" Model demonstrates that some Turkisms did not merely fill lexical gaps in the Russian language but became its active cultural donors, generating powerful images and idioms. The highest degree of assimilation is observed in those Turkisms that acquired a symbolic or evaluative meaning, such as "bazaar" (chaos) or "kaftan" (status).

Further research can include a quantitative analysis of MD using phraseological dictionaries and text corpora to obtain precise statistical data.

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