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COMPARATIVE-TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WORD-FORMATION METHODS IN TURKISH AND ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article presents a comparative-typological analysis of word-formation processes in Turkish, an agglutinative language, and English, characterized by predominantly analytic-flectional features. The aim of the study is to identify the principal word-formation methods found in these two unrelated languages — affixation, compounding, conversion, clipping, blending, and reduplication — to compare their relative degree of productivity, and to reveal how the typological properties of each language shape its word-formation processes.

Keywords: word-formation, affixation, conversion, compounding, agglutinative language, analytic language, blending, comparative typology, morphemic density.

Word-formation is one of the most dynamic and practically significant branches of linguistics, serving to expand a language's lexicon, express new concepts, and reflect the internal laws governing the language's development. Each language shapes its own word-formation mechanisms in accordance with its morphological typology. Turkish belongs typologically to the group of agglutinative languages, in which word-formation is carried out mainly through the sequential attachment of affixes, each of which, as a rule, expresses a single grammatical or lexical meaning. English, by contrast, shifted historically from an inflectional to a predominantly analytic structure, as a result of which "economical" word-formation devices such as conversion, clipping, and blending acquired comparatively higher productivity[1].

The relevance of the topic is determined by several factors. First, under conditions of globalization, contacts between Turkish and English, translation activity, and comparative-linguistic research are gaining ever greater importance. Second, in teaching English as a foreign language, speakers of Turkic languages (including Uzbek and Turkish) often experience particular difficulty in mastering English conversion and other analytic word-formation patterns, which calls for a comparative methodological treatment. Third, recent advances in corpus linguistics and computational linguistics have expanded the possibility of studying word-formation processes through quantitative methods.

The scientific novelty of the present study lies in the fact that the word-formation methods of Turkish and English are compared not only qualitatively but also quantitatively (statistically), so that the morphological-density indicators of the two languages are substantiated with concrete figures. The aim of the study is to identify the principal word-formation methods of Turkish and English, to analyze their degree of productivity, and to explain the reasons behind the typological differences observed. Accordingly, the following tasks were set: (1) to outline the theoretical foundations of word-formation in the two languages; (2) to determine the frequency of use of each method on the basis of the selected corpus; (3) to interpret the results from a typological standpoint; and (4) to identify the practical fields of application of the conclusions reached.

The question of word-formation has a long history in world linguistics. In the study of English word-formation, the classification developed by Marchand (1969), as well as the morphological

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theories of Bauer (1983) and Plag (2003), occupy an important place. The phenomenon of conversion has been examined in depth by Bauer and Valera (2005), who relate the high productivity of conversion in English to the analytic structure of the language[2].

In Turkic linguistics, word-formation has been treated in detail by Lewis (1967) within the framework of Turkish grammar, and by Göksel and Kerslake (2005) in the context of the structure of modern Turkish. In Uzbek linguistics, questions of affixal word-formation in Turkic languages have been reflected in the works of scholars such as Reshetov, G'ulomov, and Tursunov. In addition, in the medieval Turkic-Islamic scholarly heritage, Mahmud Kashgari's Devonu Lug'otit Turk serves as an important source for the study of Turkic morphology, containing some of the earliest descriptions of Turkic word-formation patterns[5].

In the field of comparative typology, the theory of language types developed by Comrie (1989) and Whaley (1997) constitutes the theoretical-methodological basis of the present study. Nevertheless, studies devoted specifically to a direct quantitative comparison of word-formation methods in Turkish and English remain insufficient, which determines the scholarly necessity of the present article[4].

Of the study identified six principal word-formation methods common to both Turkish and English: affixation, compounding, conversion, clipping, blending, and reduplication. The share of each method within the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Frequency distribution of word-formation methods in Turkish and English

Word-formation method	Turkish (n / %)	English (n / %)	Difference (pp)
Affixation	208 / 52%	136 / 34%	+18
Compounding	112 / 28%	88 / 22%	+6
Conversion	16 / 4%	72 / 18%	-14
Clipping	24 / 6%	48 / 12%	-6
Blending	8 / 2%	40 / 10%	-8
Reduplication	32 / 8%	16 / 4%	+4

As Table 1 shows, affixation is the leading method in both languages, though its share in Turkish (52%) is considerably higher than in English (34%). This is explained by the agglutinative nature of Turkish, in which several affixes are attached sequentially to a single root to form new words and grammatical forms (e.g., ev — evler — evlerimiz — evlerimizden, illustrating chained affixation).

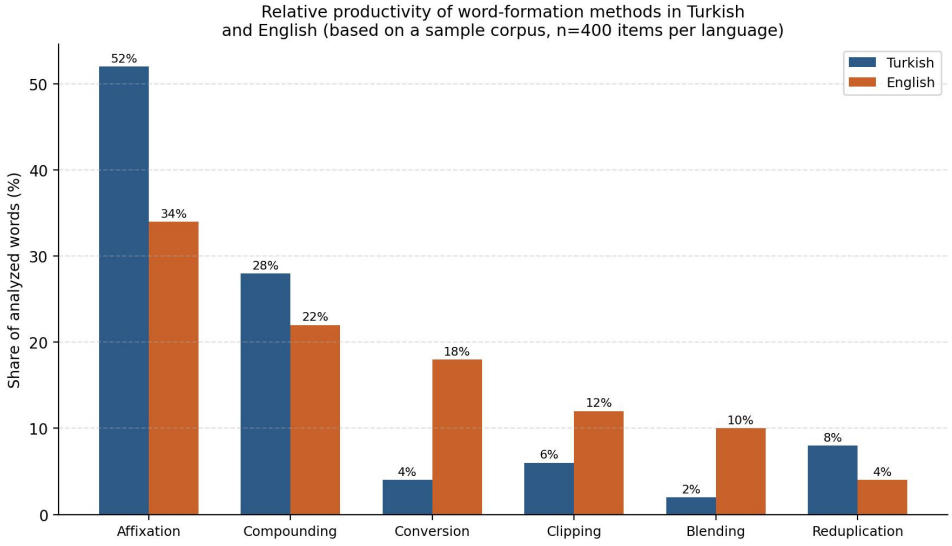
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At the same time, conversion was found to be considerably more productive in English (18%) than in Turkish (4%). This difference is linked to the analytic structure of English, which allows a word to shift from one part of speech to another without any change of grammatical form (e.g., to run (verb) — a run (noun); water (noun) — to water (verb)). In Turkish, by contrast, any shift between parts of speech is normally carried out by means of an appropriate affix, so pure conversion is relatively rare[3].

Clipping and blending were likewise more prominent in English (12% and 10%, respectively) than in Turkish (6% and 2%). This difference may be explained by the active development, under the influence of colloquial style and mass media, of "economical" word-formation models in English (e.g., info < information; smog < smoke + fog). Reduplication, conversely, is somewhat more active in Turkish (8%) than in English (4%), which is connected with the sound-symbolic repetition tradition characteristic of Turkic languages (e.g., güzel güzel, yavaş yavaş).

Figure 1.

Relative productivity of word-formation methods in Turkish and English

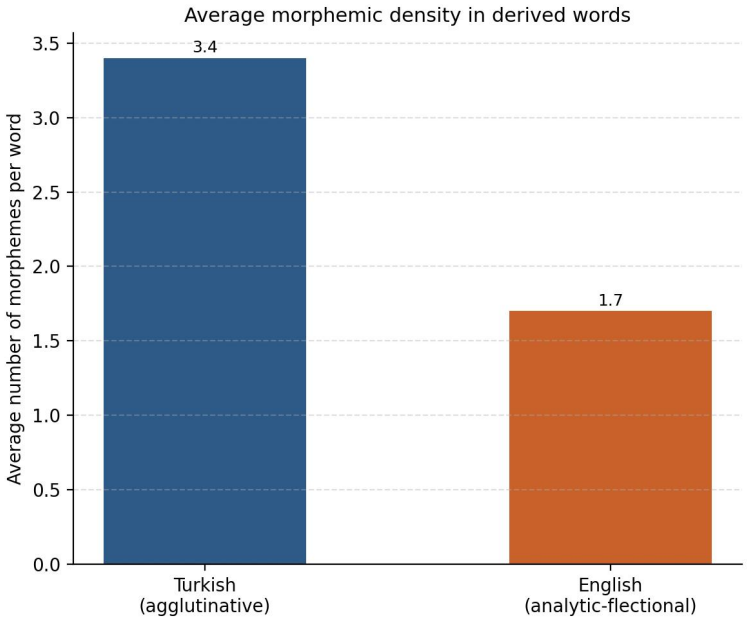


A further notable finding concerns morphemic density: derived words in Turkish contained, on average, 3.4 morphemes, whereas the corresponding figure for English was 1.7 (Figure 2). This difference clearly reflects the typological nature of the two languages — as an agglutinative language, Turkish is able to combine a greater number of morphemes within a single word, whereas English exhibits a comparatively "lighter" morphological structure.

Figure 2.

Average morphemic density in derived words

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The practical significance of the findings is evident in several directions. First, in teaching English as a foreign language, particular attention and clear exemplification are required when introducing speakers of Turkic languages (including Uzbek and Turkish) to word-formation models such as conversion and blending, which are unfamiliar to them. Second, in translation practice — particularly in the translation of literary and journalistic texts — words formed in English through conversion often need to be rendered into Turkish or Uzbek by means of appropriate affixal devices. Third, the statistical data obtained may serve as a preliminary empirical basis for further research in corpus linguistics and computational linguistics, including the development of automatic morphological analysis systems[6].

The study has established that there are significant typological differences between the word-formation methods of Turkish and English. In Turkish, affixation and compounding occupy the leading position, whereas in English, analytic methods such as conversion, clipping, and blending display comparatively higher productivity. These differences are directly connected with the morphological typology of the two languages — the agglutinative character of Turkish and the analytic-flectional character of English.

The findings of the study can be applied practically in comparative linguistics, in foreign-language teaching methodology, and in translation studies. Extending this line of research to a broader corpus, and to other Turkic and Germanic languages, would be of considerable scholarly value for the future development of the field.

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