

THE MORPHOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF AFFIXES IN UZBEK AND TURKISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This article provides a comparative morphological analysis of affixes in the Uzbek and Turkish languages, focusing on their grammatical, derivational, and syntactic functions. As members of the Turkic language family, both Uzbek and Turkish exhibit agglutinative morphological structures, wherein affixes serve as the primary means of expressing grammatical relationships and word formation. The study explores similarities and differences in affix usage, productivity, and semantic transparency. It also examines how affixes reflect historical language development and contemporary linguistic evolution. The research contributes to broader understanding of Turkic linguistics and morphological typology through detailed analysis of affixation mechanisms in both languages.

Keywords

affixation, Uzbek language, Turkish language, morphology, agglutinative structure, grammatical function, derivational affixes, typology

Affixation lies at the heart of Turkic morphological structure, functioning as the core mechanism for both grammatical inflection and word derivation. In Uzbek and Turkish, two closely related yet distinct members of the Turkic family, affixes play an essential role in forming verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Their agglutinative nature allows for complex syntactic constructions through the linear addition of multiple affixes to a single root, each carrying distinct grammatical or lexical meaning. However, despite genetic proximity and typological alignment, Uzbek and Turkish affix systems demonstrate both parallelisms and divergences shaped by phonological, historical, and sociolinguistic factors.

The Uzbek language, part of the southeastern (Karluk) branch of Turkic languages, and Turkish, belonging to the southwestern (Oghuz) branch, both exhibit agglutination, yet their affix inventories and morphological patterns reflect different developmental paths. In both languages, affixes may be classified into **inflectional** and **derivational** categories. Inflectional affixes in

Uzbek and Turkish are used to indicate case, person, number, tense, aspect, mood, and voice, while derivational affixes generate new lexical items or alter grammatical categories.

In terms of **case marking**, both languages employ suffixes rather than prepositions. For example, the Uzbek **-ni** (accusative) and Turkish **-i/-ı/-u/-ü** serve similar syntactic roles:

- Uzbek: *kitobni o'qidim* (I read the book)
- Turkish: *kitabı okudum* (I read the book)

These suffixes follow vowel harmony rules—more extensively in Turkish—demonstrating one of the core morphological strategies common to both languages. Turkish maintains strict vowel harmony in affixation, where suffix vowels adjust according to front/back and rounded/unrounded distinctions. Uzbek, on the other hand, has partially lost vowel harmony, especially in its standard literary form influenced by Persian and Russian, though traces remain in dialectal usage.

In **personal agreement markers**, both languages use person-number suffixes attached to verbs. Compare:

- Uzbek: *Men boraman* (I will go) → *-man* (1st person singular)
- Turkish: *Ben gideceğim* (I will go) → *-ceğim* or *-acağım* (future + 1st person singular)

The Turkish future tense marker *-ecek/-acak* combines with the personal suffix, whereas Uzbek uses a synthetic form with root modifications and personal endings. The morphological layering in Turkish tends to be more transparent and regular, whereas Uzbek exhibits more syncretism and allomorphic variation, especially in colloquial speech.

In **voice affixation**, the passive, causative, and reciprocal affixes demonstrate high productivity in both languages. The causative suffixes *-tir/-dir* in Uzbek and *-tir/-dir/-t/-d* in Turkish serve nearly identical functions:

- Uzbek: *o'qimoq* (to read) → *o'qitmoq* (to make/read)
- Turkish: *okumak* → *okutmak*

However, morphophonemic changes in Turkish are more rule-governed due to its extensive vowel and consonant harmony systems. Additionally, Turkish allows for recursive affixation more systematically, where causative-passive combinations can appear in nested structures, such as:

okutulmak (to be made to be read)

Another significant area of comparison is **derivational affixation**, where both languages employ a rich set of suffixes to form new words from base stems.

For example, nominalizers like *-chi* in Uzbek and *-ci/-cı* in Turkish produce agent nouns:

- Uzbek: *o'qituvchi* (teacher)
- Turkish: *öğretici* (instructor)

While both affixes function similarly, Uzbek often uses Persian-derived suffixes such as *-dor*, *-noma*, or *-goh* (e.g., *kitobxona* – library), which have no direct equivalents in Turkish. Turkish, in contrast, integrates more productive use of native suffixes like *-lik/-lık*, *-siz*, and *-li*, maintaining higher morphological regularity and transparency.

The phenomenon of **suffix stacking**, a hallmark of agglutinative typology, is prominent in both languages. Words like *ko'rsatmayapman* (Uzbek, “I am not showing”) and *göstermiyorum* (Turkish, same meaning) consist of multiple suffixes strung in strict morphological order: root + negation + progressive aspect + personal marker. This recursive structure showcases how affixes encode extensive grammatical information compactly, a feature shared with other Turkic languages such as Kazakh or Kyrgyz.

Nevertheless, Uzbek and Turkish differ in their interaction with loanwords and the integration of non-Turkic morphological elements. Uzbek, due to historical Persian and Russian influence, exhibits mixed morphological constructions. For instance, loan verbs like *telefon qilmoq* (to telephone) maintain hybrid constructions, where a noun (of foreign origin) is combined with a native verb. Turkish, on the other hand, tends to naturalize loanwords more thoroughly into its derivational system, often coining fully Turkic alternatives to foreign terms.

Moreover, recent reforms in Turkey under Atatürk led to a conscious purification of the Turkish lexicon, including efforts to revive Turkic affixation over Arabic and Persian morphology. Uzbek did not undergo such systemic purism, resulting in a greater degree of morphological hybridity, especially in legal, academic, and technical domains.

From a **diachronic perspective**, the divergence in affix behavior reflects not only linguistic evolution but also cultural and political trajectories. Turkish morphology has become more regularized and codified due to state-driven reforms and prescriptive grammars, whereas Uzbek exhibits greater dialectal variation and influence from bilingual communities. This divergence also impacts language learning, language technology development, and the creation of NLP tools.



In sum, affixes in both Uzbek and Turkish demonstrate core similarities rooted in their common Turkic heritage: suffixation dominance, absence of prefixes, productive voice and aspect marking, and rich derivational possibilities. However, phonological patterns, affix ordering, and the degree of morphological transparency differ significantly, reflecting unique historical and sociolinguistic influences. Comparative morphological analysis of affixation in these languages reveals not only structural commonality but also dynamic evolution, shaped by internal rules and external contacts.

Such analysis contributes to typological linguistics, computational morphology, and language pedagogy by deepening our understanding of how agglutinative systems function and vary. It also highlights the importance of comparative study within a single language family, demonstrating how shared ancestry may produce both continuity and divergence in grammatical expression.

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