



LEXICAL CORRESPONDENCES IN TARJUMAN TURKI AND BULGHATIL MUSHTAQ

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Abstract. This study examines the lexical and semantic correspondences between *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, two important sources for the study of medieval Turkic lexicography. The analysis focuses on lexical items that occur in both works and investigates the extent to which their forms, meanings, and Arabic equivalents correspond. Particular attention is given to cases in which the same Turkic word is represented by different Arabic equivalents, resulting in apparently different English interpretations. The analysis demonstrates that differences in translation do not always indicate genuine semantic divergence. The study also considers differences in the lexical composition of the two dictionaries. The findings demonstrate that a systematic comparison of these sources contributes to a more precise reconstruction of the semantic range of medieval Turkic vocabulary and provides further insight into the lexicographical practices reflected in the two works.

Keywords: *medieval Turkic, Turkic lexicography, lexical semantics, etymology, Arabic equivalents, manuscript variation, astronomical terminology.*

Introduction. Medieval Turkic dictionaries are important sources for studying the historical development of Turkic vocabulary, semantic change, and Arabic-Turkic lexicographical interaction. *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq* contain numerous lexical correspondences, but their entries sometimes differ in Arabic equivalents, contextual interpretation, or form.

Such differences require a comparative approach rather than a direct reliance on individual glosses. Gerard Clauson's *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* provides an important basis for this comparison because it records the meanings and historical development of Turkic words across different sources.

This study examines selected lexical items from *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, focusing on their semantic correspondence, differences in Arabic equivalents, morphological structure, and possible textual variation. It also considers differences in the lexical composition of the two dictionaries, particularly the presence of astronomical terminology in *Bulghatil Mushtaq*. The aim is to clarify the meanings of selected lexical items and identify the factors underlying their different interpretations.



Materials and methods. The study is based on selected lexical entries from *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq*. The entries were compared according to their Turkic forms, meanings, Arabic equivalents, and contextual usage.

Clauson's *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* was used as the principal comparative source. Where necessary, the meanings recorded by Clauson were compared with evidence from other Turkic sources.

The analysis also considers morphological structure and possible scribal or textual errors. Particular attention was given to cases in which different Arabic equivalents produce apparently different English meanings. Contextual evidence was used to determine whether such differences represent genuine semantic variation or simply differences in translation.

A comparative analysis of *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq* reveals a substantial number of lexical items that are similar in both form and meaning. Such correspondences provide valuable evidence for establishing the meanings of individual words and for evaluating the accuracy of their Arabic equivalents and subsequent English interpretations. In this respect, comparison with Gerard Clauson's *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* is particularly useful, as it makes it possible to examine the meanings attested in the two dictionaries alongside their usage in other Turkic sources.

One illustrative example is the lexeme *biliş*. In different Turkic sources, this word has been interpreted with meanings such as "knowledge" and "acquaintance." Its contextual distribution in *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, however, provides grounds for a more specific interpretation. In *Tarjuman Turki*, *biliş* appears in a section concerned with different types of people, although no direct English equivalent is provided. In *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, the same item is marked simply with "ditto," indicating that its meaning is understood from the preceding context. Importantly, *biliş* in this dictionary also occurs among lexical items referring to people. The parallel contexts therefore suggest that "acquaintance" is a more appropriate interpretation than the broader and more abstract meaning "knowledge." This example demonstrates that contextual evidence within the dictionaries can be crucial for determining the intended meaning of a polysemous or potentially ambiguous lexical item.

The comparison also shows that lexical items with essentially the same Turkic form and semantic value may be represented by different Arabic equivalents in the manuscripts. Such differences can subsequently result in somewhat different English glosses in Clauson's dictionary. The lexeme *yazuq*, for example, is rendered as "mistake" in *Tarjuman Turki*, whereas in *Bulghatil*



Mushtaq it is associated with the meaning “crime.” The apparent semantic discrepancy may largely be explained by the different Arabic equivalents used in the two manuscripts. Evidence from other Turkic sources recorded in Clauson’s dictionary provides a broader semantic perspective, in which *yazuq* may also be interpreted as “sin.” Thus, the differences among “mistake,” “crime,” and “sin” should not necessarily be regarded as evidence of entirely distinct lexical meanings; rather, they may reflect different contextual choices in translating the same Turkic lexeme.

A similar case can be observed with the word *ev*. In *Tarjuman Turki*, the lexeme is given with the Arabic equivalent *al-bayt*, whereas *Bulghatil Mushtaq* uses *ad-dar*. Despite the difference between the Arabic forms, both expressions can denote a “house” or dwelling. The variation therefore appears to concern the choice of Arabic equivalent rather than a fundamental difference in the meaning of the Turkic word. The entry in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* is particularly noteworthy because *saray* is also presented in association with *ad-dar*. This raises an interesting question concerning the semantic relationship between *ev* and *saray* in the manuscript.

Clauson’s dictionary provides additional evidence for interpreting these forms. The lexeme *ev* is associated with the Arabic equivalents *al-bayt* and *ad-dar*, both of which can be translated as “house.” By contrast, *saray* is associated with *ad-dar* and is glossed as “palace,” although Clauson marks this interpretation with a question mark. The expression *saray aydan*, which appears as a subsidiary note under *ev*, is also significant. The Arabic element *aydan*, meaning “also,” may indicate that *saray* was intended as an additional equivalent or related lexical item. At the same time, the absence of the Arabic definite article *al-* before *saray* may suggest that the form was being presented as a Turkic word rather than as an Arabic equivalent. Although this interpretation should be treated with caution, the structure of the entry provides useful evidence for understanding the way lexical equivalence was represented in the manuscript.

Etymological evidence is equally important when examining derived lexical forms. Some of the Turkic words found in *Tarjuman Turki* are explained in greater detail in Clauson’s dictionary, particularly with regard to their morphological structure and relationship to their lexical roots. In some cases, the semantic difference between a derived form and its base is considerable. The verb *boluṣti*, for instance, is glossed as “to help,” whereas its base *bol-* means “to become.” Clauson explains that the derived verb originates from *bol-* “to become” with the reciprocal or cooperative suffix *-ṣ*. The earlier semantic value of the form can



therefore be understood as “to be together” or “to act jointly.” From this notion of acting together, the verb subsequently developed the meaning “to help,” based on the semantic association between being together with someone and assisting that person. The example illustrates how morphological analysis and semantic development can account for a meaning that is not immediately apparent from the lexical root alone.

Another set of examples demonstrates the difficulties caused by divergent manuscript readings and possible scribal errors. The lexeme *özüt* is particularly noteworthy. In *Tarjuman Turki*, it is associated with the Arabic expression *al-shaytan* and is translated by Clauson as “devil,” whereas in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* it is associated with *al-mawta* and rendered as “the dead.” Clauson further notes that the form in *Tarjuman Turki* appears to be erroneous, describing it as “in error Örüt unvocalized.” This observation suggests that the discrepancy between the two dictionaries may not represent genuine semantic variation. Instead, it may have resulted from an incorrect manuscript reading or orthographic transmission. Such examples demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between semantic variation and textual corruption when interpreting medieval Turkic lexicographical sources.

The lexeme *bağla* provides another example of variation in Arabic equivalents. In *Tarjuman Turki*, the word is associated with the Arabic verb *rabata*, which Clauson renders as “to tie up.” In *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, the corresponding Arabic verb is *ghallaqa*, translated as “to bolt.” Although the English glosses are not identical, the Arabic verbs belong to a closely related semantic field involving fastening or securing an object. The difference, therefore, does not necessarily indicate a substantial semantic divergence in the Turkic lexeme. Rather, it may reflect the different Arabic verbs selected by the compilers of the two dictionaries to convey a related meaning.

A comparable difficulty occurs with *kölük*. In *Tarjuman Turki*, its Arabic equivalent is *jam‘ al-hamir*, which Clauson interprets as “a collective term for donkeys.” In *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, however, *kölük* is associated with the Arabic form *al-carw*, whose English equivalent in Clauson’s dictionary is “puppy.” Clauson identifies this form as an erroneous writing of *kuçuk*. Consequently, the discrepancy between the two entries is more plausibly explained by a textual or lexical error than by a genuine difference in the meaning of *kölük*. This example further emphasizes the need to consider manuscript readings, Arabic equivalents, and comparative etymological evidence together when establishing the meaning of a medieval Turkic lexical item.



The evidence discussed above points to several distinct types of lexical correspondence between *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq*. Some words preserve a similar form and meaning in both dictionaries, while others display apparent semantic differences resulting from the use of different Arabic equivalents. In still other cases, morphological derivation, scribal errors, or variant manuscript readings account for the differences observed between the two sources. A comparison with Clauson's dictionary helps distinguish these possibilities by situating individual lexical items within the broader historical development of Turkic vocabulary.

Accordingly, the interpretation of the lexical material in *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq* should not be based solely on the immediate Arabic glosses found in the manuscripts. The semantic context of each entry, its morphological structure, its parallels in other Turkic sources, and the possibility of textual corruption all need to be taken into consideration. Such a multidimensional comparison allows the meanings of problematic lexical items to be established with greater precision and contributes to a more accurate understanding of the lexicographical practices represented in these two medieval Turkic dictionaries.

Conclusion. The comparison of *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq* shows that differences between their lexical entries may arise from several factors, including contextual interpretation, different Arabic equivalents, morphological development, and textual variation. The examples of *biliş*, *yazuq*, and *ev* demonstrate that different translations do not necessarily indicate different Turkic meanings. The cases of *boluşti*, *özüt*, *bağla*, and *kölük* further show the importance of etymological and textual analysis in establishing the meaning of problematic forms. The two dictionaries also differ in their lexical coverage. *Tarjuman Turki* contains substantial practical vocabulary, whereas *Bulghatil Mushtaq* includes a wider range of specialized terms, particularly astronomical vocabulary. The use of *ayğır* in *ak ayğır* illustrates how ordinary Turkic words could acquire specialized meanings.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the interpretation of medieval Turkic lexical material should be based on the combined evidence of manuscript context, Arabic equivalents, comparative Turkic sources, and etymological analysis. This approach allows the lexical and semantic relationship between *Tarjuman Turki* and *Bulghatil Mushtaq* to be established more accurately.

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