

Arabic Loanwords in Tatar and Swahili: Morphological Assimilation

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Abstract

This article deals with the analysis of the morphological assimilation of Arabic loanwords into Tatar, Altai language family, and Swahili, Bantu language family. The urgency of this review is caused by the fact that the formation of both Tatar and Swahili was influenced by Arabic, which had profoundly influenced them in religious, scientific, cultural and economic aspects. In this paper we apply the comparative approach that is aimed at finding isomorphic and allomorphic features in the languages studied and identifying their peculiarities in the process of Arabic vocabulary assimilation. The morphological assimilation of Arabic loanwords into these languages is realized by verbal nouns, participles, nouns denoting place and action. One of the *isomorphic* features of the recipient languages is the absence of the category of gender both in Tatar and Swahili; among the *allomorphic* peculiarities are postposition of adjectives after nouns in Swahili and the use of compound verbs with Arabic nouns as their stems in Tatar. The results of the research will contribute to the loanword studies in these unrelated languages.

Keywords: Arabic loanwords, morphological assimilation, isomorphic and allomorphic features, Tatar, Swahili

1. Introduction

Every language changes as time passes. Language contact as a worldwide sociolinguistic phenomenon influences this process as well. One of this contact results is lexical borrowing. Moreover, as M. A. Al Btoush asserts, in order to cope with innovations and new experiences and discoveries the language needs loanwords which can cover up-to-date concepts and any new ideas (Al Btoush, 2014).

The loanwords of different languages have been studied from various perspectives. Basem I. M. Al-Raba'a's paper is concerned with the structural borrowing from English to Arabic in translation (Al-Raba'a, 2013). Kwasi Adomako analyzes underapplication of the phonological process in Akan in the domain of loanword adaptation (Adomako, 2013). M. A. Al Btoush explores English loanwords and the reasons behind their increase in the daily Jordanian speech (Al Btoush, 2014).

As for loanword studies in Tatar and Swahili, they are mostly based on revealing donor-languages and analyzing loanword phonological and morphological changes. Thus, G.Kh. Akhatov compared the usage of lexical loanwords in the Tatar language (Akhatov, 1979). F.S. Safiullina analyzed the phonological and morphological assimilation of Arabic-Persian loanwords into Tatar (Safiullina, 1999). I.I. Siraziyev studies Arabic loanwords in modern Tatar (Siraziyev, 2002).

First scientific attempts to Swahili studies began in the middle of the XIX century. As Thilo C. Schaderberg points out, the Swahili database is based on the perusal of dictionaries and loanword studies (Schadeberg, 2009). L. Krapf (1882) and E. Steer (1884) started the documentation of Swahili lexicon and grammar. A. Madan (1931), F. Jonson (1939), Ch. Sacleux (1939), B. Krumm (1940), E. Ashton (1956) contributed in this field (Myachina, 1960). Zawawi (1976) analyzed the Arabic loanwords and claimed some interesting etymologies for Swahili words of Bantu origins. Batibo H.M. (1996) compared nativized English loanword clusters in Tswana and Swahili and emphasized the expansion of lexical stock to respond to technical, scientific and educational demands (Batibo, 1996). In his research Th. C. Schaderberg (2009) highlights contact situations in the Indian Ocean territory: Swahili as a contact language and donor languages throughout its history, Arabic being the most important among them (Schadeberg, 2009).

2. Methodological Framework

Our research aimed at comparing the morphological assimilation of Arabic loanwords into Tatar and Swahili. This article reveals the morphological peculiarity of the Arabic loanwords included in both active and passive lexicon of languages studied. The comparative analysis is aimed at finding isomorphic and allomorphic features in both languages and identifying the peculiarities of these unrelated languages in the process of Arabic vocabulary assimilation.

3. Results

3.1 The Analyses of Arabic Loanwords in Tatar and Swahili

The formation of both Tatar and Swahili was influenced by Arabic, which had profoundly influenced them in religious, scientific, cultural and economic aspects. Both languages used the Arabic script. The change from Arabic script to the Russian alphabet in the Tatar language and to the Latin alphabet in Swahili served as one of the reasons for the gradual fading away of Arabic words and their replacement by native words. Thus, the vocabulary of modern Tatar language has lost a huge number of Arabic loanwords that had been actively used in fiction and scientific literature before the beginning of the XX century. Some Arabic lexical units have been strongly transformed and, accept by intuition, they wouldn't be able to be identified in the recipient languages. For example, the Arabic proverb **وعد الحر دين** [wa'du-l-hurri dain] “the promise of a noble is a debt of honour” functions in Swahili with a low degree of borrowing identification: *Ahidi ni deni* “The promise is a debt”.

Swahili, a Bantu family language, and Tatar, an Altai family language, are both agglutinative languages. Therefore, there should be a general tendency toward Arabic word assimilation.

While analyzing loanwords in Swahili Th. C. Schaderberg asserts that throughout its history, Swahili has been a contact language... the adoption of numerous loanwords occurred... (Schadeberg, 2009). It is well known that Arabic has always been in contact with other languages throughout history. It has been the most important donor language in the Indian Ocean trading network as well... the variety of Arabic that served as a lingua franca for that region has itself been enriched by borrowings from those languages. As a result, many etymons can be found in more than one of the languages involved, and it is not always possible to identify the immediate donor language of a particular loan word in Swahili. Moreover the linguist describes Swahili as a Bantu language with many Arabic terms... (Schadeberg, 2009).

It is obvious that Swahili in contrast to other Bantu languages has been strongly influenced by Arabic especially its vocabulary. So, more than half of class 9 nouns are Arabic loanwords, such as *saa* “a clock, watch” (ساعة [saa'a]). As Gromova N.V. and Okhotina N.V. point out these nouns are not assimilated with the help of prefixes what is rare for loanword assimilation in Swahili, eg. *akili* “mind” (عقل [aqil]). Moreover, all borrowed words with unvoiced consonants at their beginning are the part of this noun class because it's one of noun class 9 characteristics: along with its prefixes *n-*, *ny-*, *m-* it has a zero one before unvoiced consonants, eg. *sanduku* “a box” (صندوق [sunduq]) (Gromova, Okhotina, 1995). Among the Arabic loanwords are different parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, numerals, prepositions, conjunctions. They are of diverse semantic fields: navigation, trade, jurisprudence, science, culture, vegetation, the house, etc.

Arabic lexical units, absorbed into Tatar and Swahili, brought their own morphological forms; they were also influenced by the grammatical rules of the recipient language, as reflected in the new morphological indicators.

Among the most active loanwords in Tatar and Swahili are nouns. They are *abstract concepts*:

Arabic	Swahili	Tatar	meaning
عقل [‘aqil]	<i>akili</i>	акыл [akyɫ]	“mind”
حكمة [hikma(t)]	<i>hekima</i>	хикмәт [hikmæt]	“wisdom”

proper names:

Arabic	Swahili	Tatar
محمد [muhammad]	<i>Mohammed</i>	Мөхәммәд [mehəmməd]
علي [‘ali]	<i>Ali</i>	Гали [gali]

words denoting persons:

Arabic	Swahili	Tatar	meaning
عسكري [‘askarii]	<i>askari</i>	гаскәри [gaskəri]	“military”
فقير [fakyir]	<i>fakiri</i>	факыйрь [fakyir]	“poor”

Religious terminology is considered to be a separate branch of borrowings apart from Arabic ones. So, Th. C. Schaderberg concludes that in the XII or XIII century Swahili society adopted Islam as its dominant religion... and opened itself to Arab poetry, music, learning and way of life – adapting and integrating these and other foreign elements with local values and thus creating a unique Swahili culture... the influence of Arabic and Islam continues until today (Schadeberg, 2009). Basem I. M. Al-Raba’a emphasizes that the status of Arabic as a superimposed language after it was established as the new cultural, administrative, and religious language of the Islamic empire did not make it impenetrable to the effect of other cultures (Al-Raba’a, 2013). For example:

Arabic	Swahili	Tatar	meaning
مسلم [muslim]	<i>maislamu</i>	мөселман [meselman]	Muslim
موذن [mu’azzin]	<i>muezzin</i>	мөэзин [meəzin]	muezzin

words denoting natural phenomena:

Arabic	Swahili	Tatar	meaning
فجر [fajr]	<i>alfajiri</i>	фәҗер [fəjr]	dawn
هواء [hawa]	<i>hewa</i>	һава [hawa]	air

objects:

Arabic	Swahili	Tatar	meaning
صابون [saabuun]	<i>sabuni</i>	сабын [sabyñ]	soap
دواء [dawa’]	<i>dawa</i>	дәва [dəwa]	medicine

words expressing time concepts:

Arabic	Swahili	Tatar	meaning
ساعة [sa’at]	<i>saa</i>	сәгатъ [səgat]	o’clock, time, watch, clock
وقت [waqt]	<i>wakati</i>	вакыт [wakyt]	time

Th. C. Schaderberg considers the most numerous Arabic loanwords being of religion and belief (47,5%), possession (41,4%) and law (41,1%) semantic fields. The other semantic groups are ranging from 5,8% to 40,6% of all Swahili words (Schadeberg, 2009). There are more adjectives and nouns among them. ...Swahili has borrowed “adjectival concepts” with relative ease (Schadeberg, 2009).

Most Arabic loanwords entered Tatar and Swahili in so-called “pause form” when there is a pause or stop at the end of the word and final short vowel case inflections, suffixed to the noun, as well as suffix *-n* (so-called [tanween] “nunation”) are not pronounced in speech. For example:

Arabic	Swahili	Tatar	meaning
كتاب [kitaab(un)]	<i>kitabu</i>	китан [kitap]	a book
حساب [hisaab(un)]	<i>hesabu</i>	хисан [hisap]	calculation
شرط [shart(un)]	<i>sharti</i>	шарт [shart]	condition

3.2 The Analyses of Arabic Words’ Assimilation into Tatar and Swahili

The analysis of the Arabic loanwords was carried out taking into account the morphological peculiarities of Arabic as a donor language and the words’ assimilation into Tatar and Swahili as recipient languages.

1. The Arabic verbs came to Swahili in their basic forms in the same function, the most active being the **فعل** [fa’ala] pattern. For example:

-samehe (سمح [samaha]) “to forgive”, -hesabu (حسب [hasaba]) “to count”, -shiriki (شارك [sharika]) “to take part”, etc. The markers of the Arabic loanwords are the suffixes **-e**, **-i**, **-u**.

These loanwords follow the grammatical rules of Swahili. Thus, directive meaning of the verb is conveyed with the help of adding the causative suffix **-sha** (**-ya**) to the basic form (in Arabic the **فَعَلَ** [fa'ala] pattern that is formed by the gemination of the second stem letter is used in this case). For example:

-rudisha “to return”, “to give back” (*rudi* “to come back”), *-safirisha* “to transport” (*-safiri* “to travel”), etc.

Among the other Arabic forms only the **تَفَعَّلَ** [tafa'ala] pattern is widely spread in Swahili, for example: *-taadabu* “to be polite” (**تَأَدَّبَ** [ta'addaba]), *-tafakari* “to ponder over” (**تَفَكَّرَ** [tafakkara]), *-taahari* “to be late” (**تَأَخَّرَ** [ta'ahhara]), etc.

In contrast to Swahili, the Arabic verbs are not used in the basic form in Tatar. Their meaning is conveyed by derived verbs formed with the help of suffixes or by compound verbs formed by adding auxiliary verbs. In this case Arabic nouns, verbal nouns, participles, and adjectives are used as the basic form of these borrowed verbs. In the suffixed way of forming verbs, the suffixes *-ла, -лә* [-la, -lə] are most frequently involved, for example: *хәрмәтлә* [hərmətlə] “show respect”, *фикерлә* [fikerlə] “think”, *зарарла* [zararla] “damage”, etc. Compound verbs are formed by adding the auxiliaries *итү* [itu] “to do”, *бирү* [biru] “to give”, *кылу* [kylu] “to fulfill”, etc.

So, the assimilation of some Arabic borrowed verbs in Tatar and Swahili can be presented in the following table:

Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
صبر [sabara]	сабыр итү [sabyr itu]	subiri	to tolerate
رخص [rahhasa]	рөхсәт бирү (итү) [rəhsət biru(itu)]	ruhusu	to allow, to permit
أجاب [‘ajaaba]	җавап бирү [javap biru]	jibu	to answer

As it can be seen from these examples, the Arabic verbs in Swahili are used in their original form, and in Tatar they are compound verbs.

2. The most numerous Arabic loanwords are presented by verbal nouns (so-called *masdars*), denoting action or state. The similar grammatical form exists in Tatar [isem figyl] as a part of verbs, and in contrast to Arabic, it has the characteristics of verbs (Zakiev, 1993). In Swahili, borrowed Arabic verbal nouns possess nominal characteristics. There are special patterns of verbal nouns for each verb pattern in Arabic. The most numerous borrowed verbal nouns are those of the **فَعْل** [fa'ala] pattern. For example:

Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
سؤال [su'aal]	сөаль [сөөл]	swali	question
فكر [fikir]	фикер [fiker]	fikira	thought

There are the following widely spread patterns of the verbal nouns in the languages studied:

verb patterns	Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
فَعْل [fa'ala]	تأثير [ta'athiir]	тәәсир [təəsir]	taathira	influence
فَاعِل [faa'ala]	معاملة [mu'aamala]	мөгамәлә [mөгәмәлә]	muamala	attitude
أَفْعَل [‘af'ala]	إلهام [ilhaam]	илһам [ilham]	ilhamu	inspiration
تَفَعَّل [tafa'ala]	تَكْبَر [takabbur]	тәкәбберлек [təkəbbərlek]	takaburi	arrogance
تَفَاعَل [tafa'ala]	توازن [tawaazun]	тәвазен [təvəzen] (outdated)	-	balance
إِنْفَعَل [infa'ala]	إنصاف [insaaf]	инсаф [insaf]	insafu	justice
إِفْتَعَل [ifta'ala]	إمتحان [imtihaan]	имтихан [imtihan]	mtihani	exam
إِسْتَفَعَل [istaf'ala]	إستراحة [istiraaha]	устирахәт [istirahət] (outdated)	starehe	rest

As it is clear from the table, the Arabic verbal noun is used in its basic grammatical form in the recipient languages with some phonetic changes as a result of specific Arabic phoneme assimilation. Most verbal nouns are substantivized and acquire morphological markers of nouns and change in case, number, and etc.

3. The other most widely-spread borrowed grammatical forms in Tatar and Swahili are Arabic active and passive participles. Some active participles are substantivized and function as nouns, for example: *мөхәррир* [möhərrir] – *mhariri* “an editor” (**محرر** [muharrir] “releasing, an editor”), *мөгаллим* [mөгallim] – *mwaliimu* “a teacher” (**معلم** [mu'allim] “teaching, a teacher”), etc. This process is connected with the peculiarity of Arabic active participles that possess nominal characteristics.

The most productive borrowed active participles of the **فَعْل** [fa'ala] pattern. The verb pattern **إِفْعَل** [if'alla] with its basic meaning “to become of certain colour or acquire some quality” (Grande, 1998) was not borrowed by the

languages studied. It explains the absence of borrowed active participles of the **إفعل** [if'alla] pattern in Tatar and Swahili. Here are the examples of borrowed active participles of different verb patterns:

verb patterns	Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
فعل [fa'ala]	كافر [kaafir]	кяфир [kyafir]	kafiri	unbelieving
فعل [fa''ala]	معلم [mu'allim]	мөгаллим [mögallim]	mwalimu	teaching
فاعل [faa'ala]	موافق [muaafiq]	муафыйк [muafyiq]	mwafaka	accepting
أفعل [af'ala]	مدير [mudiir]	мөдир [mөdir]	mudir[i]	managing
تفعل [tafa''ala]	متحرك [mutaharrik]	мөтэхәррик (уст.) [mөtөhәrrik]	-	moving
تفاعل [tafa'ala]	متشارك [mutashaarik]	мөтәшарик (уст.) [mөtәsharik]	-	taking part
إنفعل [infa'ala]	منكاشف [munkashif]	мөнкәшиф [mөnkәshif]	-	discovered
إفتعل [ifta'ala]	محتاج [muhtaaj]	мохтаж [mohtaj]	mhitaji	needy
استفعل [istafa'ala]	مستقل [mustaqill]	мөстәкыйль [mөstәqyil]	-	independent

As for borrowed passive participles, they are not as numerous in the languages studied and mostly presented by those of the **فعل** [fa'ala] pattern. For example:

Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
مشهور [mashhuur]	мәшһур [mәshhur]	mashuhuri	famous
معلوم [ma'luum]	мәгълүм [mәglym]	maalum	definite

4. The Arabic qualitative and relative adjectives with the suffix **ي** [ij] are used in Tatar and Swahili, but in some cases they have different meanings. For example:

Arabic	Tatar	meaning	Swahili	meaning
عزيز [ziiz]	газиз [gaziz]	dear	azizi	darling
كامل [kaamil]	кәмиль [kamil]	perfect	kamili	finished
مصري [misrij]	-	Egyptian	misri	Egyptian
اقتصادي [iqtisadij]	икътисади [iktisadi]	economic	-	-

The borrowed qualitative adjectives in Tatar are mostly substantivized, for example: *ахмак* [ahmaq] “fool” from Arabic **أحمق** [‘ahmaq] “foolish”, etc.

The borrowed adjectives in Swahili don't have special markers as in Arabic and, in contrast to Tatar, are in postposition after nouns, for example: *sahani safi* “a clean plate”, etc.

5. The similar characteristic of both Tatar and Swahili is the absence of the category of gender. The Arabic morphological feminine suffixes **ة** [a(tun)] and more rarely **اء** [aa'u] and **ى** [aa] are pronounced as [a] in Swahili and as [ә] or [a] in Tatar. For example:

Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
درجة [daraja(tun)]	дәрәжә [dәrәjә]	daraja	level
معنى [ma'naa]	мәгнә [mәgnә]	maana	meaning
فائدة [faa'ida(tun)]	файда [faida]	faida	benefit

Unlike Swahili, in Tatar there are loanwords assimilated with their own feminine markers **ة** [a(tun)] and function as [at] or [әt]. For example:

Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
صورة [suura(tun)]	сурәт [surәt]	sura	appearance
لغة [luga(tun)]	лөгәт [lөгәt]	lughā	language
ساعة [saa'a(tun)]	сәгат [sәgat]	saa	time, watch, clock, o'clock

The same characteristic can be traced in the following borrowed proverb: *Хәрәкәттә – бәрәкәт* [hәrәkәttә bәrәkәt] “Movement is divine grace” (**في الحركة بركة** [fi al-haraka – baraka]). In Swahili this proverb has additional shade of meaning: *Haraka haraka haina baraka* “there is no divine grace in hurrying”.

The Arabic category of gender influenced Tatar. So, nouns denoting occupation have gender differences, for

example: *шагыйр* [shagir] “poet” – *шагыйрә* [shagirə] “poetess”, *ғалим* [‘alim] “male scientist” – *ғалимә* [‘alimə] “female scientist”, etc. In Swahili only the masculine form is used for denoting both masculine and feminine genders, for example: *mwalimu* – “teacher”, *mhudumu* – “waiter, waitress”, *mudir[i]* – “manager”, etc.

6. There are two plural categories in Arabic: Broken Plurals, that are formed by shifting the consonants into different vowel patterns so that the syllabic structure of the word changes, and Sound Plurals (Masculine and Feminine), that are formed by adding plural suffixes: **ون** [uuna] for masculine and **ات** [aat(un)] for feminine (Mingazova, 2014). In Tatar, both Arabic plural categories are borrowed, the Sound Feminine plural form being the most productive, for example: *әдәбият* [ədəbiyaat] “literature”, *нәширият* [nəshriyaat] “press”, etc. In Swahili this form is rare: *maakulati* “food”.

Until the first half of the XX century, Tatar vocabulary had a huge number of Arabic loanwords in broken plural forms: *әвәәж* [əvuəj] “husband and wife”, *мәваид* [məvaid] “set table”, etc. These words have faded away and have been replaced by Tatar, Russian, or foreign words (Siraziyev, 2002).

Apart from Tatar, the category of number in Swahili is not separated from the class system of nouns. Singular class nouns correlate with plural class nouns (Gromova, Okhotina, 1995). This peculiarity of plural class markers is in a way similar to the Arabic Broken plural forms that have more than ten different patterns (Mingazova, 2014). Mostly all borrowed loanwords in Swahili acquire Swahili plural class markers: *rafiki* “friend” – *marafiki* “friends”, *shaka* “doubt” – *mashaka* “doubts”, *kitabu* “book” – *vitabu* “books”, and etc. Some of them don’t change in number: *matini* “a text, texts”; *hadithi* “story, stories”; *hatua* “a step, steps”; *kalamu* “a pen, pens”, etc. In Tatar on the contrary some Arabic plural forms are used in the singular meaning: **أعضاء** [‘a’daa] “members” – *әвәә* [əvəə] “a member”, **أسباب** [‘asbaab] “belongings” – *әсбәп* [əsbəp] “an object of belongings” (Siraziyev, 2002).

In Swahili, there is a borrowed plural form that is used in the singular meaning: *baharia* “a sailor” (from Arabic **بحري** [bahrij] “a sailor” – **بحرية** [bahriya] “sailors”) that changes in number: *baharia* “a sailor” – *mabaharia* “sailors”.

7. So-called nouns denoting place and action of the **مفعل** [maf’al] or **مفعل** [maf’il] patterns sometimes adding the feminine suffix **ة** [a(tun)] are borrowed as well both in Tatar and Swahili:

Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
محكمة [mahkama]	мәхкәмә [məhkəmə]	<i>mahakama</i>	court
مدرسة [madrasa]	мәдрәсә [mədrəsə]	<i>madrasa</i>	madrasah
مسرح [masrah]	-	<i>masirahi</i>	theatre

In Swahili these words, as a rule, are used in the plural meaning.

8. There are some borrowed Arabic set phrases in the languages studied:

- praying exclamations that are used as interjections:

Arabic	Tatar	Swahili	meaning
ما شاء الله [ma sha’a allah]	машаала [mashalla]	<i>mashalla</i>	It’s great!
إن شاء الله [in sha’a allah]	инша алла [insha alla]	<i>inshallah</i>	God willing!

- In Swahili there is a case of borrowing preserving the morphological markers of the categories of person, gender and number: *a[h]sante* “thank you” from the Arabic **أحسننت** [ahsanta] “you (masculine, singular) did it greatly” in the meaning of “bravo, wonderful”.

4. Discussions

The loanwords of different languages have been recently studied by different scholars: Basem I. M. Al-Raba’a (2013), Kwasi Adomako (2013), M. A. Al Btoush (2014), etc. Arabic loanwords in Tatar have been analyzed by G.Kh. Akhatov (1979), F.S. Safiullina (1999), I.I. Siraziyev (2002), etc. Arabic loanwords in Swahili have been studied by Zawawi (1976), Th. C. Schaderberg (2009), etc. This paper presents the first attempt to compare the morphological assimilation of Arabic loanwords into both Tatar and Swahili applying the comparative approach.

5. Conclusion

So, the analysis of the morphological assimilation of Arabic loanwords into Tatar and Swahili has revealed the following peculiarities:

1. The morphological assimilation of Arabic loanwords into languages studied is realized by different grammatical forms of the donor language: verbal nouns, participles, nouns denoting place and action, etc.

2. In Arabic words' assimilation the *isomorphic* features of recipient languages were observed: assimilation of words in so-called "pause form"; the absence of the category of gender both in Tatar and Swahili; substantivizing process of Arabic verbal nouns and active participles, etc.; as well as *allomorphic* peculiarities were traced. In Swahili: the borrowing of the broken plural form; the use of verbs in Arabic basic forms; postposition of adjectives after nouns; the usage of singular nouns denoting place and action in the plural meaning. In Tatar: the use of compound verbs with Arabic nouns as their stems; the influence of Arabic on the category of gender.

The analysis of Arabic loanwords reveals the essence of language borrowing process as a result of cross-cultural communication between different ethnic and language groups.

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