



THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE LEXICAL AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF BULGHATIL MUSHTAQ AND TARJUMAN TURKI

Ganiyeva Barchinoy

The Department of English Language and Literature,
Namangan State University, Namangan, Uzbekistan

ganiyeva1011@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study presents a comparative analysis of two 14th-century Mamluk-era Turkic–Arabic bilingual dictionaries, *Bulghatil Mushtaq* by Jamal al-Din al-Turki and *Tarjuman Turki*. Both manuscripts, composed in scholarly style, reflect the linguistic, cultural, and social dynamics of their time. The analysis demonstrates that while the lexical composition of the two works is largely similar, they differ significantly in the methods of translation, degree of explanation, thematic organization, and intended audience. *Bulghatil Mushtaq* provides concise single-word translations of complex terms, particularly in scientific and military domains, indicating its orientation toward the educated elite. In contrast, *Tarjuman Turki* offers extensive explanatory glosses, cultural notes, and etymological references, suggesting that it functioned as a more accessible guide for multilingual communities. Comparative examination of thematic sections further reveals differences in structural arrangement, with *Tarjuman Turki* covering a broader range of categories.

KEYWORDS

Bulghatil Mushtaq,
Tarjuman Turki,
Mamluk period,
comparative linguistics,
lexical structure,
etymology, scientific
terminology.

INTRODUCTION

Each language family possesses distinctive features that differentiate it from other language families. For example, the Turkic languages are characterized by syngarmonism, that is, the absence of consonant clusters at the beginning of words, the invariability of roots, and the fixed order of syntactic elements. The totality of these features is referred to as the linguistic structure of the language family, which reflects a specific historical stage of its development. It should be emphasized that commonalities among languages are not necessarily the result of a single origin; genetic relationship must be distinguished from accidental similarity.

Another characteristic feature of the Turkic languages is the proximity of their lexical stock. Their grammatical structure likewise shows considerable similarity. Consequently, with the exception of Chuvash and Yakut, Turkic-speaking peoples are able to understand one another in their native languages to a certain extent (Yoʻldoshev, Primov, & Yoʻldoshev, 2012, p. 31). Since the manuscripts are compiled in the form of dictionaries, they are written in a scholarly style. In both manuscripts, features typical of scientific discourse are present: explanations, definitions, synonyms, and dialectal

variants. Nevertheless, in most cases, word meanings are rendered through single-word equivalents. Among the manuscripts belonging to the same period, a comparative study of *Bulghatil Mushtaq* and *Tarjuman Turki* is necessitated by several factors.

LITERATURE

The manuscript “Bulghatil mushtaq” was written by Jamaluddin at-Turki, and has been studied extensively by scholars such as Zajackowski (ZajackowskiA. 1954; 1958), Fayzullayeva (FayzullaevaSh. 1968; 1969; 1973), Gaynutdinova (GaynutdinovaG. 2005), Al-Turk Gulhan (Al-Turk Gulhan 2012), though the manuscript has not yet been studied sufficiently. Today one copy of the manuscript is being kept in the National Library of Paris under the number of 293.

The manuscript “Tarjumon turki” has been in the centre of scientific researches, and studied by Houtsma (HoutsmaM. 1894), Kuryshzhanov (KuryshzhanovA.1970; 1983), Flemming (FlemmingB. 1968), Dozi (Dozy R. 1851), Garkavets (ГаркаветH. 2019), Mukhammedova (MukhammedovaZ. 1969), Yunusov (YunusovA. 1980), Jafarov (JafarovB. 2021; 2023) and other scholars whose researches play significant role in turcology. Nowadays, the manuscript is maintained in the Leiden library, Netherlands.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative linguistic analysis to examine the grammatical features of “Bulghatil Mushtaq” and “Tarjumon Turki”. The original manuscripts were analyzed to identify grammatical rules, phonetic distinctions, and verb conjugation patterns, special attention was given to structural elements such as noun pluralization, possession markers, and imperative verb formation. The grammatical explanations provided in “Bulghatil Mushtaq” and “Tarjumon Turki” were compared to highlight similarities and differences, morphological patterns such as suffixation for plurality, possession, and verb conjugation were systematically categorized. The findings were contextualized within the broader linguistic landscape of the Mamluk period, considering the role of Turkic as a lingua franca among the military elite. Secondary sources, including previous research on medieval Turkic linguistics, were reviewed to support the analysis.

Analysis and Results

Both manuscripts were written in the Mamluk state in the 14th century. Furthermore, both works were composed for scholarly purposes, encompassing lexicographical and linguistic principles. Our research has revealed that their lexical content is highly similar, and the main differences lie in the choice of vocabulary, their translations, and the manner in which explanations are provided. Several factors may account for these differences.

First, the place of composition may have varied. In the 14th century, the Mamluk state held dominion over Egypt and Syria. Although both works belong to the Mamluk era, it is possible that one was written in Egypt and the other in Syria.

Second, the aims of the works differ. *Bulghatil Mushtaq* was compiled in response to the need for Arabic speakers to acquire the Turkic language, as Mamluks—originally Turkic military slaves (*mamlūks*)—rose even to the rank of sultans. In *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, certain terms that would normally require clarification are left unexplained. For example, *Tāmir qazuq* – “the Pole Star” and *Ikki bōz ot* – “the constellation of Ursa Minor” are presented without commentary, suggesting that the manuscript

was intended for an audience already familiar with such scientific terminology. Similarly, a number of military terms are provided without explanation. Considering that the political and administrative center of the Mamluk rulers at that time was located in Egypt, it is reasonable to assume that the work was composed there.

Furthermore, the manuscripts employ a script appropriate for scientific works, namely the naskh script, which is free of decorative elements and written in a clear and legible manner. However, unlike *Tarjuman Turki*, the entries in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* exhibit a decorative arrangement: the words are inscribed in zigzag lines, with two zigzag rows forming a rhombus. Such paired rhombus-shaped rows occur five times on each folio of the manuscript, resulting in thirty entries per page. In *Tarjuman Turki*, by contrast, the words are written in plain text without such ornamental design, although in both works colored inks are employed in a similar manner.

Another common feature of the manuscripts is the arrangement of words: in both manuscripts, the sections devoted to nouns are organized thematically, whereas the chapters devoted to verbs are arranged according to the order of the Arabic alphabet. Similarly, the chapter headings and their sequence are almost identical: in both manuscripts the first chapter begins with “The Sky and words related to it,” while in the second chapter, words referring to things on earth are divided into various thematic sections.

The fact that in these dictionaries the Arabic words are given first, followed by their Turkic equivalents, is further evidence that they were compiled in order to help Arabic speakers learn the Turkic language.

In the manuscript *Tarjuman Turki*, certain chapters or sections occur which are absent in *Bulghatil Mushtaq*. For instance, the fourteenth section: Household utensils, carpets, and items specific to women (this section is further subdivided into two parts: the first containing “kitchen utensils” and the second “some women’s clothing and ornaments”). The fifteenth section: Clothing, textiles, and their varieties (subdivided, with a list of different types of cloth). The sixteenth section: The human figure, its external and internal organs (subdivided, including “intestines and the inner parts of the human body”). The eighteenth section: Ranks of people and occupational terms. The nineteenth section: Human qualities. The twentieth section: Names of various things and their opposites. The twenty-second section: Explanations of the Turkic names of mamluks (slaves), female servants, and others (subdivided, including “the names of concubines”). The twenty-third section: Colors. Such thematic sections and the vocabulary contained in them are not found in *Bulghatil Mushtaq*.

Conversely, certain words found in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* do not appear in *Tarjuman Turki*. For example, terms related to astronomy: *Tämir qazuq* – Qovg’a burji, the Pole Star; *Ikki böz ot* – the constellation Ursa Minor; *Yetkan* – the constellation Ursa Major.

Such words are not given in detail in *Tarjuman Turki*; nevertheless, the term *Ülkar* – the Hülkar star does occur. However, it is characteristic of *Tarjuman Turki* that the chapters and sections cover a wider thematic range. By contrast, in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* a greater number of words are provided within a single thematic category.

In *Tarjuman Turki*, certain groups of words are arranged in separate sections, whereas in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* they are incorporated into larger chapters. For instance, the second section in *Tarjuman Turki*, “On the earth and its places,” and the third section, “On water and the things within it” (itself subdivided into words concerning water and words concerning creatures living in water and ships), appear in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* within the second chapter “On the earth and its contents, minerals, and

other things.” Although in this work they are not subdivided into smaller sections, the words relating to water, aquatic creatures, and ships are nevertheless arranged in the same order as in *Tarjuman Turki*. In *Tarjuman Turki*, words are often accompanied by detailed explanations, while in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* their translations are generally rendered in a single word. For example, *Tarjuman Turki* provides the following commentary: “Dried cheese – *qurut*, this word is also used with reference to insects – *qurt*. Furthermore, they prepare a very dark substance from milk and whey, which they place in a cleaned stomach, cut into pieces with a knife, and it is even more sour than the seeds of a pomegranate, and they call it *qara qurut*.” Here the word is extensively explained. In *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, however, the same term appears only as a brief translation: *Qora qurut* – “extremely sour dried cheese.”

In *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, some words that are presumed to have been given on the missing pages are present in *Tarjuman Turki*. At the end of folio 14a of *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, the chapter entitled “On beverages” is indicated, yet on folio 14b the words that were supposed to appear in this chapter are missing due to the loss of several folios. In *Tarjuman Turki*, however, a chapter with the same title exists, and the words contained therein may be assumed to correspond to those given on the missing pages of *Bulghatil Mushtaq*. The titles of chapters assumed to have been found on the missing folios of *Bulghatil Mushtaq* can be reconstructed through the subjects provided in *Tarjuman Turki*. On folio 14b of *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, the chapter concerning words related to kinship is found without a title because some of the preceding folios are missing. In *Tarjuman Turki*, by contrast, this chapter is preserved in its entirety.

The methods of presenting homonyms differ in several respects between the two manuscripts. In the case of *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, owing to the author’s skill, certain Turkic homonymous words and their Arabic equivalents simultaneously convey two meanings. For example, the word *Sinir* is used with the dual meanings “meat with sinew” and “nerve,” while its translation, *al-asabu* (الْعَصَبُ), likewise carries these two meanings: “meat with sinew” and “nerve.” Similar examples are frequently encountered: *Yek – az-zawba’atu* (الزَّوْبَعَةُ) – in the senses of “demon” and “storm”; *qurmo – al-tamaru* (الْتَمَرُ) – in the meanings of “date” and “date fruit” (this word retains exactly these two senses in contemporary English as well). Furthermore, unlike in *Tarjuman Turki*, the author of *Bulghatil Mushtaq* does not introduce homonyms merely when the occasion arises, but arranges them in accordance with thematic relevance. For instance, the word *avuz* occurs twice within the section devoted to dairy products, but the occurrences are not consecutive: *avuz* – “colostrum (BM13b/3.5)” appears after *Quyrtamaq* – “camel’s milk,” whereas *avuz* – “ferment of yogurt or cheese, leavening agent (BM14a/5.1)” appears in connection with words related to bread.

Such glosses generally address multiple aspects of the word, including its meaning, synonym, homonym, etymology, origin, and even its methods of preparation

In the course of our research, it became evident that the lexical composition, arrangement, and method of presentation in *Bulghatil Mushtaq* indicate that the work was written for the higher strata of society or for scholars. The fact that certain terms are translated with a single equivalent word, without further explanation, suggests that the text was not intended for the general populace. This is particularly apparent in the case of astronomical and astrological terminology: *Tämir qazuq* – “Qovg’a” constellation, the Pole Star; *Ikki böz ot* – the constellation of Ursa Minor; *Yetkan* – the constellation of Ursa Major; *Çolban* – “Cholpon,” Venus (*Zuhra*); *Quş yöli* – the Milky Way; *Yag’ir sog’in* – the Taurus constellation; *Ariqtoq* – the constellation Orion; *Oq Ayg’ir* – Sirius (*Shi’rā*).

In contrast, *Tarjuman Turki* provides detailed explanations for each word that may be difficult to understand. For instance: “*Qurtilgan pishloq – qurut*, this word is also used in reference to insects – *qurt*; moreover, they prepare from milk and whey a very dark substance, which is placed inside a cleaned stomach, cut with a knife, and is more sour than pomegranate seeds; they call it *qara qurut*.” While the word *qara qurut* also appears in *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, it is given there only in translation, without further elaboration.

Another indication that *Tarjuman Turki* was written as a general manual for communities living in one region but speaking different languages is the presence of extensive notes on the etymology of words, specifying the language from which a word was borrowed. For example: “*ferištā* (farishta) – in Persian,” “*šorba* – ‘shorva,’ borrowed from the Persian word *šorbā* (شوربا), meaning ‘a salty liquid dish.’” Naturally, *Bulghatil Mushtaq* also includes such notes in some places, as in “*oluram* in Turkmen,” or “*Tutmoç* – in Qipchaq.” However, in *Bulghatil Mushtaq*, significantly less attention is devoted to etymological commentary compared to *Tarjuman Turki*.

Conclusion

The comparative study of *Bulghatil Mushtaq* and *Tarjuman Turki* reveals that although both manuscripts share a common historical setting and purpose, they diverge in structure, methodology, and audience. *Bulghatil Mushtaq* reflects a concise, elitist orientation, aimed at readers already familiar with scientific and military terminology, while *Tarjuman Turki* offers detailed commentary, broader thematic coverage, and explicit etymological notes designed for wider practical use. These distinctions demonstrate not only the functional diversity of lexicographical works in the Mamluk era but also the dynamic role of Turkic as a medium of intercultural communication. Ultimately, the two manuscripts complement one another in documenting the linguistic and cultural environment of the 14th century, providing invaluable insights into the history of Turkic philology and the intellectual heritage of the Mamluk period.

References

1. Al-Turk Gulhan (2012). *Kitābu Bulġatu’l-muštāk fī luġati’t-Türk we’l-Ḳifċāk üzerine dil incelemesi* [A linguistic analysis of *Kitābu Bulġat al-Muštāk fī Luġat at-Turk wa-l-Qifjaq*] (Master’s thesis). Gazi University, Social Sciences Institute, Ankara.
2. Dozy R. (1851). *Catalogus codicum Orientalium Bibliothecae Academiae Lugduno-Batavae* (No. CCXII). Leiden: E. J. Brill.
3. Fayzullaeva Sh. (1968). *O slovarе Djamal ad-Dina at-Turki* [On the dictionary of Jamal ad-Din at-Turki]. *Obshchestvennye nauki v Uzbekistane* [Social Sciences in Uzbekistan].
4. Fayzullaeva Sh. (1973). *Ob arabsko-kipchakskom slovarе Djamal-ad-Dina Abu Mukhammadada Abu Allakha at-Turki* [On the Arabic-Kipchak dictionary of Jamal ad-Din Abu Muhammad Abu Allah at-Turki]. *Sovetskaya Tyurkologiya* [Soviet Turkology].
5. Fayzullaeva Sh. (1969). *Issledovanie iazyka pamiatnika XIV v. “Kitabu bulg‘at al-mushtaq fī lug‘at at-Turk va-l-Qifjaq” Djamal ad-Dina at-Turki* [A study of the language of the 14th-century monument *Kitabu Bulg‘at al-Mushtaq fī Lug‘at at-Turk wa-l-Qifjaq* by Jamal ad-Din at-Turki] (Doctoral dissertation). Tashkent.
6. Flemming B. (1968). *Ein alter Irrtum bei der chronologischen Einordnung des “Targuman turki va agami va mugali”*. *Der Islam*, 44, 226–229.

7. Garkavets N. (2019). *Kitab-i Majmu‘-i Tarjumān-i Turki wa ‘Ajami wa Mughalī wa Farsi* [The collected book of the interpreter of Turkic, Persian, Mongolic, and Farsi]. Almaty: Baur.
8. Gaynutdinova G. (2005). *Istoriko-lingvisticheskiy analiz turkotatarskogo pismennogo pamiatnika XIV veka Jamal al-Dina at-Turki “Kitabu bulat al-Muṣṭak fi Lugat at-Turk wa-l-Kifḥak”* [Historical and linguistic analysis of the 14th-century Turkic-Tatar written monument of Jamal ad-Din at-Turki]. Kazan.
9. Houtsma M. (1894). *Ein türkisch-arabisches Glossar. Nach der Leidener Handschrift herausgegeben und erläutert*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
10. Jafarov B. (2021). *Tarjumon Turkiy va Ajamiy va Moguliy va Forsiy qo‘lyozmasi xususida* [On the manuscript *Tarjumon Turkiy va Ajamiy va Moguliy va Forsiy*]. *NamDU Axborotnomasi* [Namangan State University Bulletin], (11), 354–358.
11. Jafarov B. (2023). *Kodeks Kumanikus hamda “Tarjumon turkiy va ajamiy va mo‘gliy va forsiy” qo‘lyozmalarining qiyosiy tahlili* [A comparative analysis of *Kodeks Kumanikus* and *Tarjumon Turkiy va Ajamiy va Mo‘gliy va Forsiy*] (Doctoral dissertation). Namangan State University.
12. Kuryshzhanov A. (1970). *Issledovanie po leksike starokypchakskogo pis’mennogo pamiatnika XIII v. – “Tiurksko-arabskogo slovaria”*. Alma-Ata: Nauka.
13. Kuryshzhanov A. (1983). *K izucheniiu leksiki “Tiurksko-arabskogo slovaria” XIII v.* In *Issledovaniia starotiurkskikh pis’mennykh pamiatnikov* (pp. 162–203). Alma-Ata: Nauka.
14. Mukhammedova Z. (1969). *Issledovaniia po istorii turkmenskogo iazyka XI–XIV vv. po dannym araboiazychnykh filologicheskikh sochinenii*. Moskva: ADD.
15. Waldman C., Mason C. (2006). *Encyclopedia of European Peoples*. New York: Facts on File.
16. Yunusov A. (1980). *Tarjumon – XIV asr yozma yodgorligi* [Tarjumon – A 14th-century written monument]. Tashkent: Fan.
17. Zajāczkowski A. (1954). *Vocabulaire Arabe-Kipchak de l’époque de l’Etat Mamelouk: Bulāḡt al-Muṣṭaq fi lḡuat at-Turk wa’l Qifḥaq, II Le Verba* [Arabic-Kipchak vocabulary of the Mamluk State: *Bulḡat al-Muṣṭaq fi Luḡat at-Turk wa-l-Qifḥaq*, Vol. 2, The Verb]. Warsaw.
18. Zajāczkowski A. (1958). *Vocabulaire Arabe-Kipchak de l’époque de l’Etat Mamelouk: Bulḡat al-Muṣṭaq fi luḡat at-Turk wa’l-Qifḥaq, II-ère partie Le nom* [Arabic-Kipchak vocabulary of the Mamluk State: *Bulḡat al-Muṣṭaq fi Luḡat at-Turk wa-l-Qifḥaq*, Vol. 2, The Noun]. Warsaw.
19. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10082257s/f1.item>