

## Some thoughts about lexical code-copying

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Within the last twenty years the different aspects of linguistic loans and influences between languages and the mechanisms behind these processes have been studied within a new theoretical framework, creating contact linguistics as a new field of linguistics. In this branch of linguistics, the mechanisms of borrowing and copying of codes between languages in contact on the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical levels are focused on. The copying between some languages that are structurally close to one another such as the Scandinavian ones has taken place more or less intensely for many centuries because of the cultural closeness and interaction between the peoples speaking them, but exactly because of this structural closeness it is not always possible to detect the borrowings or to decide in what direction they have taken place. However, because Turkish structurally is so different from the neighboring languages, it is usually not difficult to sort out the features that have a foreign origin, and it is also usually quite easy to detect borrowings from Turkish in the neighbouring languages. Accordingly, Turkish and the Turkic languages have become an excellent laboratory for the study of the mechanisms of language contact. Thus, one of the most important scholars in contact linguistics, Sarah Thomason, made one of the most interesting contributions to this field based on the Cappadocian Greek material that was collected by Richard McGillivray Dawkins in the first decade of the 20th century. In some villages of Cappadocia, Greek had become so strongly influenced from Turkish that it had lost some of the most basic characteristics of Greek and replaced them with Turkish features.

The areas and fields of contact where the Turkic languages have been involved, have especially been studied by Lars Johanson (1992, 2002). As pointed out by him, although there is no general agreement between researchers in this field about what level of the language is more prone to copying from other languages, there seems to be a general agreement among linguists that vocabulary is a level of the language that is easily exposed to foreign influence. And within the lexicon, verbs are relatively stable while nouns are more easily copied. As will be understood when we look at Turkish or any other modern language, it is especially words that represent something new, especially a new technological invention, that are copied. Needless to point out, the reason why English computer terminology dominates Turkish and all other European languages, is of course the fact that the technology itself usually comes from English-speaking countries. Also the status of the source language is quite important. If we consider the thousands of words that entered Turkish from Arabic after the adoption of Islam by the Turks, both the status the Arabic language had got because of the new religion, and the fact that quite a number of the new words represented new religious concepts have been important fac-

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tors in this process. In the same way, words of Persian origin were accepted equally easily because of the high status Persian literature attained in the Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman centuries.

It is not difficult to imagine that lexical items that entered the written language through religion or literature, rapidly spread to all the geographical regions where that written language was used, but the same thing is of course not the case with words that entered local dialects through oral contact with the source language. As is well known, quite a number of words have entered Turkish both through the written language and through oral contact. In this case the form that has come through the written language has had a much greater geographical diffusion than the form that has come through oral contact – at least when we look at the situation in modern times. An example of this is the word *asker*, which is of Arabic origin. While the form *asker*, which has come through written language contact, is the dominant form in practically whole Turkey, the form the word has in Persian, *āskār*, has spread in a limited area through oral contact, and is used today only in some archaic dialects mostly in East Anatolia. The same is the case with the form *ehtiyar*, which is a Persian-based form of the much more common written language form *ihitiyar*. In this process, the status of the written language most probably has played an important role. However, it should be emphasized that this tendency towards standardization most probably is new, and that variations were much more prolific all over Anatolia before the written language spread to every corner of Anatolia by the means of newspapers, radio and television.

When it comes to the words in Turkish of Greek and Armenian origin, it is probably right to assume that all these originally were copied or borrowed not from the written language but were oral borrowings. Nevertheless, some of them have also entered the written language and are used today all over Turkey, e.g. words of Greek origin such as *temel* and *şınır* and words from Armenian such as *torun* and *tel*. Especially thanks to the works of Andreas Tietze (1955, 1962), Christos Tzitzilis (1987), Robert Dankoff (1995), and Uwe Bläsing (1992, 1995), the words in Turkish coming from Greek and Armenian have been thoroughly pinpointed and studied. As is also pointed out by Zeynep Korkmaz (2003), most of these words represent areas of specialization within everyday life. Thus, most of them may be characterised as technical terminology. If a certain generalization is allowed, we may say that quite a lot of the words of Armenian origin belong to the field of building construction and agriculture while quite a number of the Greek ones have to do with cooking and fishing; however, this varies from district to district. As shown by Robert Dankoff (1995: 12), in quite a number of cases, there are synonymous words taken both from Greek and Armenian, such as Greek *turpan*, Armenian *kerenti* 'scythe', Greek *gübre*, Armenian *ahbun* 'manure', Greek *öreke*, Armenian *kirmen* 'spindle', Greek *gerdel*, Armenian *külek* 'wooden pail'. If we take a general look at Anatolia, we may say that in most geographical areas there are loanwords of a more or less clear-cut terminological character representing the different aspects of life. However, their diffusion is to a certain extent dependent on where the Armenians and Greeks were living in former times. Thus, words of Armenian origin are especially frequently found in the East, while Greek ones are more frequent in the West. However, it should be kept in mind that these words spread very fast outside their area of origin. Thus, it is quite wrong to conclude from the

use of the word *ahbun* in a certain area that there has been an Armenian population there previously, or that the word *gübre* points to a previous Greek population. The use of a certain word in this or that dialect may be due to quite a lot of different factors. What I want to point out is that the existence of words of foreign origin in a certain dialect may not be used as a proof for the previous existence of certain ethnical groups in this or that area.

However, if the vocabulary of a certain dialect contains an element of foreign origin which may be characterized as excessive and a certain number of these foreign words are not found outside this dialect, this shows without great need for doubt that the foreign language in question at a certain point in history has been spoken excessively in that area. A classical example of this is the vast lexical element of Turkish origin found in the Balkan languages. This subject has especially been studied by Suzanne Kakuk (1973). It seems that the number and frequency of Turkish words in these languages vary according to how long the area in question has been under Ottoman rule. Thus, while Turkish words in dialects in Slovenia are relatively few, the frequency in Bosnia and Macedonia is very high; however, in the case of Bosnia, religion may also have played a decisive role, of course. An interesting example from Turkey is the Hemşin dialect spoken in the province of Rize, which has been studied extensively by Uwe Bläsing (especially 1992 and 1995). In this dialect, words of Armenian origin are especially prolific, and many of them are not found in other Anatolian dialects. As shown by Bläsing, the reason for this is the presence of a considerable group of Armenian-speakers in former times; another explanation does not seem to be possible.

In his work *Trabzon ve Yöresi Ağzları* (2006), Necati Demir claims that the number of Greeks in Trabzon has been very low throughout history, and that the vast majority of Christians in the region actually were Turks. Using as a starting-point the fact that the 14th century geographer Dimeşki, talking about languages spoken in the Eastern Black Sea region, does not mention Greek, he tries to show the low importance of Greek in the region. The same claims are repeated by Zeynep Korkmaz in her review (2009) of my book about the Turkish Trabzon dialects (2002). According to this distinguished scholar, there were more Orthodox speaking Turkish, especially Kipchak Turkish, than Greek-speaking Orthodox in that area. In spite of these claims there are yearbooks (*salnames*) from Trabzon, reports from the population exchange in the first half of the 20th century, and numerous other written sources showing the high number of the Greek-speaking Orthodox population in the area. In addition, the Sumela Monastery in Trabzon had a rich library. 62 of the books it contained were brought to Ankara during the population exchange, and are today in the Turkish National Library. Among these books there is only one in Turkish written with Greek letters (Bees 1939), but the Turkish it is written with, is typical of Western Anatolia. If the Orthodox population of Trabzon generally had been Turkophone, one would have expected that the number of this kind of books would be considerably higher. It is also a well-known fact that the Greeks who were sent to Greece during the population exchange, established clubs and associations everywhere they settled in order to keep their own dialect and culture alive. Considerable research has been done on the Greek spoken in the rural parts of Trabzon, and thanks to the linguistic data, there can be no doubt that there has been a Greek-speaking population element in

the region for centuries. It should also not be forgotten that this special variety of Greek still today is spoken in some villages in the *ilçes* of Çaykara and Tonya by the local Muslim population.

The Greek linguist Christos Tzitzilis, a student of Andreas Tietze, has studied the words of Greek origin found in Anatolian Turkish dialects. As sources for his study, which appeared in 1987, he has used most of the monographs and articles on Anatolian dialects which had appeared up to then, alongside the *Derleme Sözlüğü*. Toward the end of the book (p. 149–151), there is a chapter on the diffusion of words of Greek origin throughout Anatolia, where it becomes evident that such words are least frequent in the South-East, but most frequent in the Eastern Black Sea region. Thus, of the 183 words of Greek origin found in the dialect material surveyed from the province of Rize, 99 ones are only found in that province, and among the 148 ones established in the Trabzon material he has used, 52 are only found in that province. Parallel figures for the other districts of Anatolia are much lower; for example, of the 38 words established for Izmir, only 4 are not found outside that province. I would have liked to compare these figures with parallel figures for Armenian words in Trabzon, but unfortunately no work on the geographical distribution of Armenian words seems to have been made. However, I can say that among Armenian loanwords I have found in my own Trabzon material, none seems to be only found in that area; they are also found in the Hemşin area in Rize and in other North-East Anatolian dialects. As I pointed out above, because loanwords spread very fast, the existence of words of Armenian origin in the Trabzon dialects cannot be used alone as a proof of the existence of Armenian speaking groups in Trabzon. (But from non-linguistic data, the presence of such groups is of course known.) However, the high number of words of Greek origin which have not been recorded outside Trabzon and Rize, testifies to a numerous Greek-speaking community in the area at a certain period in history; any other logical explanation is difficult to find.

It should be pointed out that the list of words of Greek origin in the Eastern Black Sea region given by Tzitzilis is in no way complete. In the material I collected during my field-work in Trabzon I also found other words of Greek origin, of which I would like to give some examples here. Before I elaborate this point further, a couple of facts concerning the etymology of this kind of words should be emphasized: Black Sea Greek, or Pontic Greek, is an extremely mixed language. Upon the layer going back to Old Greek, which is perhaps the oldest ones, different layers from different languages, such as Laz, Armenian and Turkish, have been added, not to speak of Caucasian languages that are extinct today. In the 1100 pages Pontic Greek dictionary which was published by Papadopoulos between 1955 and 1961, if an entry has a clear Old Greek etymology, this etymology is given, but alongside this, a lot of entries carry the remark “unknown etymology” or “Turkish origin”. As the Eastern Black Sea region is very close to the Caucasus, a lot of different languages have been spoken and influenced one another since time immemorial in this area; accordingly it is in many cases very difficult to decide from which language a certain word has originated. However, since the vocabulary of Old Greek is very well known, it is possible to establish which part of the vocabulary goes back to Classical Greek, and this is what Tzitzilis has done in his study. In order to show the importance Greek has had for the lexicon of the Turkish Black Sea dialects, I want to mention a couple of words I have found in the Trabzon material which was recorded by myself, and

which are not – to my knowledge – mentioned in any other study on Anatolian dialects, including the *Derleme Sözlüğü* and Tzitzilis' study.

One of these words is *alalays etmek* (33/86),<sup>1</sup> meaning 'to cry out'. This is connected to the Old Greek verb *alalázō*.<sup>2</sup> As shown by Tzitzilis, when verbs are copied from Greek into the Turkish Back Sea dialects, it is usually the so-called aorist stem (which in Greek mostly has the same meaning as the Turkish perfect in *-DI*) which is taken as a base. The aorist 1st person singular of this verb is *alaláyisa*, and the aorist stem is *alaláyis*. A similar procedure is found in the form *kúyıs etmek* (55/6), which also means 'to cry out'. This comes from Greek *koízō*<sup>3</sup> 'to sing (of a bird), to crow', of which *kóisa* is the aorist. Another example is *şaxlis etmek* 'to cough up phlegm', which comes from the Pontic Greek verb *şaxlízō*,<sup>4</sup> which is again derived from Pontic Greek *şafła* 'phlegm', which again seems to be a derivation of Latin *salvia* 'spit'.

Another Greek word elsewhere unattested, is found in the form *raşı* 'hill' (4/26). This comes from Old Greek *raxís*,<sup>5</sup> which according to regular sound development in Pontic Greek gets the form *raşi*. In my material this word is e.g. found in toponyms such as *Mesoraş*, 'orta tepe'.

Other words from my material are, e.g. *nife* (7/7, Old Greek *nymfē*) 'young girl', *krifteriça* (34/15) 'hide-and-peek', related to the Old Greek verb *kryptō* 'to hide',<sup>7</sup> *röge* (54/56)<sup>8</sup> 'distaff' or 'spindle'; the same Greek (or perhaps originally Italian) word is already found in Standard Turkish in the form *öreke*, and *tiraf* (65/8)<sup>9</sup> 'pit, hole', coming from Old Greek *táfros*, which has the same meaning.

*iskeme* (77/3), meaning 'shell', especially the shell of a snail, most probably comes from Old Greek *sképē/sképi* 'cover, protection'.<sup>10</sup> The same word, which also means 'roof', most probably is the one represented in the dialect of Edirne in the form *işkep*,<sup>11</sup> which belongs to construction vocabulary.

The expression *hon olmak* (125/97) 'to burn to ashes' comes from the Pontic Greek word *xónos* 'burning ashes'.<sup>12</sup> However, in Old Greek the same word seems to be mostly related to metal casting;<sup>13</sup> hence the connection is not hundred percent clear.

An informant in the *ilçe* of Arsin, speaking of a summer pasture called Holeyter, says as follows (66/21, in a somewhat shortened version): "Holeyterde oyin oynadıkları anlarda

- 1 The numbers in brackets refer to the texts in Brendemoen 2002, e.g. text no. 33, line no. 86.
- 2 Liddell & Scott 1966: 60.
- 3 Papadopoulos I: 477, Liddell & Scott 1966: 966.
- 4 Papadopoulos II: 268.
- 5 Papadopoulos II: 247, Liddell & Scott 1966: 1566.
- 6 Papadopoulos II: 85.
- 7 Liddell & Scott 1966: 1000.
- 8 Papadopoulos II: 252.
- 9 Papadopoulos II: 412, Liddell & Scott 1966: 1761.
- 10 Liddell & Scott 1966: 1606.
- 11 *Derleme Sözlüğü* 2564.
- 12 Papadopoulos II: 539.
- 13 Liddell & Scott 1966: 2014.

bir lefterleri varımış, lefter, yani ismen lefter. Bu şindi oyun oynarmış. Yani oyunun elebaşı. Ona yane o oynadukça oa demişler ki dön lefter dön lefter dön lefter. Ondan xolefterin ismi kalmış holefter.” (“When they were dancing in Holefter, they used to have a *lefter*; that is, his name was *lefter*. He used to dance. As the leader of the dance. When he danced, they would tell him: turn, lefter, turn *lefter*. From that the name of *holefter* has become *holefter*.”) The informant is right pointing out that the name has to do with dancing, but in fact it denotes not the dancing person, but the place of the dance: In Greek, the verb *xorévō* means ‘to dance’;<sup>14</sup> the root is well-known in Turkish in the name of the dance typical of the Eastern Black Sea coast, *horon*. The suffix *-ter* was derived in Byzantine times from the Latin suffix *-erium/-arum* denoting place or instrument; the same suffix is found in the Eastern Black Sea area e.g. in the noun *serander*, denoting a special storage building constructed on pales in order to keep the stored foodstuff dry. The word *serander* is not Turkish, as claimed by Necati Demir (2003), but comes, as mentioned by Tzitzilis (1987: 93) and pointed out again by Hasan Eren (2004), from the Greek word for ‘dry’, *ksērós*, or rather a verb derived from this adjective, *ksērainō* ‘to dry’,<sup>15</sup> plus the same suffix *-ter*. Thus, *serander* means ‘a place for drying’. By the way, the reason why the informant in Arsin thinks Holefter signifies a person, could perhaps be an association he makes to the name of the famous football player Lefter. This person, who belonged to the Greek minority of Istanbul, used to play for Fenerbahçe and the National Football team until the 1960s, and was very famous indeed, and his famous name may have been the reason for the misunderstanding of the meaning of the toponym Holefter. Since the recording was made in 1979, when this informant was 45 year old, there is no doubt that he was familiar with the name of this football player.

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<sup>14</sup> Liddell & Scott 1966: 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Liddell & Scott 1966: 1190.

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