

Derivative and Stylistic Features of Verbs of Words of Persian Origin in the Bosnian Language

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Abstract

Before it was fully adopted by the Bosnian language, a Persian loanword, from the moment it was borrowed from the source (Persian) to the receiver (Bosnian) language, would undergo various stages of adaptation on the phonological, morphological, and semantic plane. Due to the fact that many Persian words entered the Bosnian language through Turkish as the mediator language, a great number of semantic changes occurred when the word was borrowed from Persian and later used in Turkish. Later on, the same meaning from Turkish would be transferred to Bosnian language. Words of eastern origin, i.e. words from Turkish, Arabic or Persian, made their way into the Bosnian language due to various influences and during various periods of time. These words were introduced to the Bosnian language mostly through Turkish and are, for that reason, referred to as turcisms. However, a more scientifically approved term is orientalisms since not all of these words belong to the Turkish lexical material, and since they involve a great number of Arabic and Farsi phrases. This paper examines the significance and role of the Turkish language as the language mediator in the case of words of Persian origin entering the Bosnian language. As loanwords, turcisms were used mainly during the 500-year-long Ottoman rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina, when the contact with the Turkish language and culture was most immediate. For that reason, the number of turcisms in the Bosnian language is quite impressive. For instance, Škaljić's Rječnik turcizama (Dictionary of Turcisms) contains 8,742 words (expressions) and 6,878 terms (1979: 23). During the Ottoman period, Persian was the language of literature, especially poetry. The most of the lexis of Persian origin entered the Bosnian language owing to great Iranian classics, but also, indirectly - through Turkish. Compared to Turkish and Arabic, lexis of Persian origin is the least present – more than 600 words in Škaljić's Dictionary of Turcisms (Akopdžanjan 2010: 18).

Keywords: Persian loanwords, Turkish language, Bosnian language, semantics changes

Introduction

The Bosnian language contains a number of words of Persian origin, mainly received through Turkish as the relay language during Ottoman rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, these words are mainly part of the passive lexis of modern Bosnian, which is primarily a consequence of the disappearance of the notions and phenomena they denote, but also a result of their replacement with other forms. However, quite a number of these lexemes appear in conversational Bosnian, where they are used for the purpose of greater expressive force. They are most frequently nouns, followed by adjectives and verbs – parts of speech that carry the largest amount of information.

This paper will focus on verbs derived from words of Persian origin, usually nouns. This is no surprise in light of the fact the majority of loanwords are nouns. This is because nouns' function is to name phenomena and objects – both those that do not have adequate local equivalents, and those that do have local equivalents, but are for some reason less prestigious and are therefore replaced with a borrowed noun. Since Persian loanwords no longer enter our language, due to the influence of different factors, the corpus of this research comprises dictionaries of modern Bosnian language¹. Namely, we thought that such lexicographical sources would represent a reliable source for a derivation and style-based analysis of verbs in Bosnian. However, since the root of such verbs is Persian, we consulted dictionaries of the Persian language in order to determine their origin and semantics. These dictionaries were used as an auxiliary tool in this derivation and style-focused analysis of verbs in the lexical stock of the Bosnian language.

Derivative features of verbs of Persian origin in Bosnian

Most verbs in our language derived from Persian words are dominative, i.e. derived from nouns. Although prefixal derivation is indeed the most productive type for

¹ They include: *Rječnik bosanskoga jezika* (2010) by Senahid Halilović, Ismail Palić and Amel Šehović, published by the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, further referred to in this paper as RBJ, as well as *Rječnik sarajevskog žargona* (2003) by Narcis Saračević, published by Vrijeme Zenica, further referred to in this paper as RSŽ.

derivation of verbs, this paper will first look at verbs of suffixal derivation, since the meaning of verb suffixes is far more precise than that of verb prefixes.

Suffixal derivation of verbs

As a method of word formation, suffixal derivation is more frequent in nouns than in verbs. Still, there are numerous verbs derived in this way.

Suffixal derivation of verbs from nouns

The most prominent are verbs derived with the following suffixes (according to: Barić – Lončarić i dr., 1979:293–294):

1. the suffix **-a-**, used to form verbs related to the meaning of the noun,
 - a) as object: *erendati* – ‘to grate potato, cheese etc.’ (RBJ: 272), *hujati* – ‘*conversat., expr.* to cause anger, fury, to anger, upset’ (RBJ: 373);

i.e. those whose meaning can be described by transforming nouns: noun + *-ati* → verb + noun in the accusative case (Babić, 1986:449), for example: *džumbusati* – ‘*conversat., expr.* to cause *džumbus*, excitement, noisy celebration’ (RBJ: 253).

The verb *erendati* is interesting in terms of norm, since the former Serbo-Croat norm recognised only the form *rend(e)isati* (MS²: 506–507), and *erende* was marked as *pokr.* [regional, provincial] (MS – MH³: 858), indicating its non-normative status and forwarding the entry to the noun *rende*. The situation is the opposite in modern Bosnian – the form *rende* is non-preferred in the norm of contemporary Bosnian (RBJ:1142), as indicated by the marking *v.* [see], forwarding the lexicographical entry to the noun *erende*.

- b) as substance or object used as a tool or a device for a particular action: *pandžati* – ‘scratch and hurt with *pandže* [claws]’ (RBJ: 872); *tamburati* – ‘*rare,* to play the *tamboura*’ (RBJ: 1316); *testerati* – ‘to cut using *testera* [saw], to saw’ (RBJ: 1327).

Derivatives of this meaning are the most frequent among verbs derived using the suffix *-a-*.

- c) as a name of a state: *beharati* – ‘to be in *behar* [spring blossom] (fruit trees), to blossom’ (RBJ: 54);

² This abbreviation is used to refer to *Rečnik srpskohrvatskoga književnog jezika*, vol. 5 (P – S) (1973), published by Matica srpska Novi Sad.

³ This abbreviation refers to *Rečnik srpskohrvatskoga književnog jezika*, vol. 1 (A – E) (1967), published by Matica srpska Novi Sad and Matica hrvatska Zagreb.

d) in various other meanings: *pendžerati* – ‘*conversat., expr.* to go to someone’ *pendžer* [window] for the purpose of courtship’ (RBJ: 889);

2. suffix **-i-**, used to derive verbs:

a) whose meaning can be described by a transformation: noun + *-iti* → verb + noun in the accusative case, for example *abdestiti se* – ‘to take *abdest*, to conduct the ritual of ablution’ (RBJ: 1); *divaniti* – ‘*expr.* 1. to speak, discuss, present, etc.; i.e. to conduct *divan* – meeting, discussion’ (RBJ: 193);

or when related with the starting noun:

b) as substance or object used as a tool or a device: *sirćetiti* – ‘to season with *sirće* [vinegar]’ (RBJ: 1194); *šećeriti* – ‘to sweeten with *šećer* [sugar]’ (RBJ:1288);

c) as an object resulting from the action denoted by the verb: *ćariti* – ‘*conversat., expr.* to acquire *ćar* [gain], to earn, e.g. through trade’ (RBJ: 148); *ćemeriti* – ‘*arch.* to build as *ćemer* [type of roof]’ (RBJ: 149), *jagmiti* – ‘trying to reach or grab something by fighting others’ (RBJ: 454); *kauriti* – ‘to turn into a *kaur*’ (RBJ: 495); *pazariti* – ‘to conduct *pazar*, to purchase or sell, to trade’ (RBJ: 885); *šičariti* – ‘*conversat., expr.* to gain *šičar* [profit, gain] easily or quickly, (*u*)*ćariti*’ (RBJ: 1292); *zijaniti* – ‘*conversat., expr.* to suffer damages or loss’ (RBJ: 1523);

d) expressing the same thing as the base noun: *bećariti* – ‘to live the life of a *bećar* [carefree, sociable, enjoying a good time, etc.]’ (RBJ: 53);

e) expressing a feature: *jaraniti (se)* – ‘*conversat., rare,* to become friends, to maintain friendship, to spend time together, to socialise’ (RBJ: 457–458);

f) denoting a particular job or profession: *pehlivaniti* – ‘to be *pehlivan*, to perform the acrobatics of a *pehlivan*’ (RBJ: 888); *piljariti* – ‘to be a *piljar*, a (green)grocer’ (RBJ: 898);

g) in various other meanings: *meziti* – ‘*conversat.,* to be served or eat *meze*’ (RBJ: 648); *nišaniti* – ‘*mil.* to take aim (*nišan*)’ (RBJ: 770); *timariti* – ‘to clean and groom (esp. a horse) using a brush or a comb’ (RBJ: 1331).

The last set of verbs belongs to a large group of derivatives – from inanimate nouns of unidentifiable general semantic definition.

3. with the suffix **-ira-**, used to derive verbs that mean:

a) to play or seek amusement: *šahirati* – ‘1. *conversat.,* to play chess for fun, 2. To attack the opponent’s king in chess’ (RBJ: 1284).

Most nouns used as the base for verbs derived using the suffix *-ira-* are of foreign origin, primarily Latin and French, and less frequently from Classical Greek and Italian, with numerous colloquial examples from German and more recently from English (data from: Klajn, 2003:355), and this kind of verbs derived from a noun originally from Persian is thus particularly interesting in terms of derivation.

4. the suffix *-isa-* used to derive verbs meaning:

- a) to be or resemble the meaning of the noun: *dembelisati* – ‘*expr.* to live like a *dembel* [lazy person]’ (RBJ: 169).⁴

If the base noun is labelled pejorative, the verb inevitably carries with it a pejorative connotation, despite the fact that the source may not register the pejorative meaning with the verb, but rather only with the noun.

- b) to perform a particular job or craft: *dunderisati* – ‘1. to be a *dunder* [builder], , 2. *pejor.* to perform building or construction work poorly’ (RBJ: 240);
- c) an action or the result of an action expressed by the noun: *mahanisati* – ‘to find *mahana* [fault]’ (RBJ: 619);
- d) a substance or an object used as a tool or a device: *testerisati* – ‘to cut with a saw’ (RBJ: 1327).

As for verbs derived using the suffix *-isa-*, particularly interesting are those which use the Turkish *-le(n)-* or *-la-* before this one, itself of Greek origin (cf. Muftić, 1960-1961:23), such as: *muhurleisati* – ‘*arc.* to place a *muhur* [stamp, seal], to certify with a stamp’ (RBJ: 680).

5. the suffix *-ova-*, used to derive verbs meaning:

- a) to be or resemble the meaning of the noun: *bećarovati* (*bećariti*) – ‘to live the life of a *bećar*’ (RBJ: 53).

Verbs ending in *-isa-* and *-ova-*, derived from animate nouns, such as the one listed in example a), denote behaviour.

- b) to perform a particular task or craft: *šegrtovati* – ‘to be a trainee craftsman, *šegrt*’ (RBJ: 1288).,

Suffix-based derivation of verbs from adjectives

Verbs are derived from adjectives using the following suffixes:

⁴ Although Bosnian classifies this word as both a noun and an adjective (RBJ: 169), here it appears as a noun and it is treated accordingly.

1. with the suffix **-i-**, when they mean ‘to develop a feature expressed by the adjective’, as in *ćoraviti* – ‘to make *ćorav* [blind], to go blind’ (RBJ: 151);
2. with the suffix **-je-**, when they mean ‘to develop a feature expressed by the adjective’, as in *ćelavjeti* – ‘to become *ćelav* [bald], to lose hair’ (RBJ: 149); *ćoravjeti* – ‘to become *ćorav*; to lose sight’ (RBJ: 151).

Prefix and suffix-based verb derivation

Some of the verbs we looked at in the previous chapter also use prefixes, hence they can be considered prefix-based derivatives. Although some authors (cf. Babić, 1986:495) restrict prefix-based derivation to a limited number of prefixes (*o-*, *ob-*, *po-*, *pod-*, *pre-*, *u-*) and suffixes (*-nuti*, *-jeti*, *-iti*, *-ati*), we decided to accept a more comprehensive treatment of this form of derivation, as elaborated in *Priručna gramatika hrvatskoga književnog jezika*, and include all the prefixes and suffixes that appear in verb derivation.

However, unlike verb suffixes⁵, which, in most cases, render clearly defined meanings, the meaning of verb prefixes do not entail such precision. Klajn even insists that ‘as language developed, certain prefixes were combined with certain verbs in a more or less arbitrary fashion’, influenced by different factors, rendering an ‘entirely unpredictable’ result (Klajn, 2002:248).

In light of this fact, we will try to offer explanations of prefixes noted in the verbs included in our analysis:

A typical meaning of verbs derived using the prefix **iz-** is completion of an action, as evident in the verb *istimariti*, which also includes sound assimilation [z into s].

The primary perfective meaning is evident in the use of the verb prefix **na-**, which can also express completion of an action (*narendati* [to complete grating, cf. above]), though not necessarily (*nanišaniti* [to take aim]).

The verb *narendati* deserves an additional comment: the prefix *na-* is added to a form which is not preferred in the Bosnian language – *rende*, probably caused by the tendency to avoid the initial hiatus. Also, the verb *narendati* is opposed to the form *izrendati*, derived under the same principle as *narendati*: prefix + root *rend-* + suffix *-a-* + suffix *-ti*, though not confirmed through sources.

⁵ The meaning of these will not be added, since they were covered in the preceding section.

Performing an action on the surface of another object is expressed using the prefix *po-* in verbs such as *posirćetiti* [to drizzle with vinegar (*sirće*)] and *pošećeriti* [to sprinkle with sugar], whereas *pokauriti* [to convert to Christianity] presents the meaning of completion of the action denoted (perfective).

Although verbs derived using the prefix *pro-* on a noun are not that numerous, our corpus includes the verb *probeharati* [cf. above], denoting a completed action (perfective).

The prefix *s-* is used to derive transitive and reflexive verbs, mainly from nouns, as evident in the example *sjaraniti se*, meaning to come together.

The meaning of the prefix *u-* in verbs such as *ućariti*, *ujagmiti* and *ušićariti* is identical – completion of the action denoted.

The prefix *za-* has numerous meanings, and those noted in the corpus include:

- inchoative: *zameziti*, *zamezetiti*;
- completed action (perfective): *zabeharati*;
- perform an action on the surface of an object: *zasirćetiti*, *zašećeriti*; but also possible with a nuanced majorative meaning.
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Therefore, it can be concluded that prefixes may change the aspect of the verbs they are attached to – they may shift their meaning from imperfective to perfective, which is the primary feature of verbs derived by prefixation.

Derivational synonymy

A number of verbs derived from words of Persian origin display a relationship of derivational synonymy – be it that suffixes are synonymous, as they are in examples such as: *bećarovati*, *bećariti*; *testerati*, *testerisati* (only in the 1st meaning) or prefixes with synonymous meaning, such as: *probeharati*: *zabeharati* (perfective meaning); *posirćetiti*: *zasirćetiti* (perform an action on the surface of an object), *posoliti*: *zasoliti* (perform an action on the surface of an object); *narendati*: *izrendati* (perfective). In principle, all these verbs are used frequently in everyday communication, since their roots denote objects, notions and phenomena present in everyday life – ‘two or three derivational forms would not have appeared in case of a rarely used item’ (Šehović, 2012:413) and the explanation of this phenomenon should certainly be sought in light of this fact.

Stylistic features of Bosnian verbs derived from words of Persian origin

There are numerous verbs derived from words of Persian origin that belong to conversational Bosnian. These include the following⁶: *jagmiti* – ‘2. trying to be ahead of others in something; rush, hasten’ (RBJ: 454); *jaraniti se* (with an added label *rarely*), *meziti*, *pekmeziti* – ‘*pejor.* whine (RBJ: 889)’; *šahirati* (in the 1st meaning), *težgariti* – ‘*pejor.* to earn money on the side, doing part-time or honorarium-based work in addition to regular employment (often in art or intellectual services)’ (RBJ: 1328); some of them are also expressive, such as: *čariti*, *džumbusati*, *hujati*, *pendžerati*, *šičariti*, *zijaniti* – ‘to suffer damages or loss’ (RBJ: 1523). We may add to this group additional examples of jargon, thus completing their assignment in terms of style. This group includes the following: *lešiti* – ‘hit, beat’ (RSŽ: 146); *lešiti se* – ‘drink heavily, use drugs, participate in a fistfight’ (RSŽ: 146); *mezetiti* – ‘abuse verbally, ridicule’ (RBJ: 648); *olešiti* – ‘beat up someone’ (RSŽ: 190); ‘hit hard, beat up with great force’ (RBJ: 822); *olešiti se* – ‘get drunk’ (RSŽ: 190); ‘get very drunk’ (RBJ: 822); *tamburati* – ‘hit someone, beat up someone’ (RBJ: 1316); *testerati* – ‘be very boring to someone, annoy someone’ (RBJ: 1327); *zijaniti* – ‘*sport.* experience defeat; lose a game’ (RBJ: 1523). All these are examples of metaphoric meaning, as is evident in the following examples, unmarked in terms of which functional style to which they belong: *beharati* – ‘(humorous) turning grey [hair]’ (RBJ: 54); *pehlivaniti* – ‘a. managing to survive in a complex situation; b. *pejor.* be a turncoat’ (RBJ: 888); *šegrtovali* – ‘be a beginner in a job and trying to learn from more experienced ones’ (RBJ: 1288); *testerati* – ‘snore very loudly (resembling the sound of a log being sawed)’ (RBJ: 1327); interestingly, pejorative meaning seems to have developed parallel to the metaphoric one, as evident in the following examples: *dunderisati* (in the 2nd meaning); *piljariti* – ‘work as a petty merchant’ (RBJ: 898); *tamburati* – ‘speak incessantly, bore the interlocutors with pointless talk’ (RBJ: 1316).

Some of these verbs are certainly marked for their expressiveness. One of them is certainly the verb *horoziti se*, derived in Bosnian from a word of Persian origin, *horoz*, which means: ‘1. rooster, 2. trigger on a firearm’ (RBJ: 368), whereas *xorūs* in Persian means: ‘1. *zool.* rooster’ (PBR⁷: 406). In Bosnian, the verb *horoziti se* belongs to the conversational style, and its figurative meaning is based on the meaning of the word it is derived from: ‘1. to become angry 2. to rise in anger, to be upset’ (RBJ: 368). The same features can be found in the verbs *dembelisati*; *pandžati se* – ‘enter suspicious relations’ (RBJ: 872), and *divaniti*, which also includes an element of pejorative meaning: ‘talk nonsense, speak pointlessly, fantasize’ (RBJ: 193).

⁶ meaning will be added for verbs described previously: they will be listed for illustration only.

⁷ This abbreviation refers to *Perzijsko-bosanski rječnik* (2010) by Mubina Moker and Đenita Haverić, published by the Ibn Sina Research Institute Sarajevo Sarajevo

Conclusion

This analysis of verbs in the Bosnian language derived from words of Persian origin leads to the following conclusions:

1. These verbs are usually derived using suffixes and prefixes, with clear evidence of derivational synonymy in certain cases.
2. Many of these verbs have developed figurative meaning, often pejorative and expressive, sometimes arising from the expressiveness of the root word itself.
3. The verbs included in this analysis are present in Bosnian mainly in the conversational style, but they can be entirely neutral in terms of affiliation with a particular functional style. This however is quite rare.

Therefore, these conclusions indicate a clear need for further research in relation to words of Persian origin in the Bosnian language, and linguists should focus in particular on their various derivatives. That is why we hope that this paper will open new avenues for more comprehensive research in this segment of our language.

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