AN EXPANDED ANALYSIS OF LOANWORDS IN HINDI

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Abstract

This paper gives a critical examination of the sources of Hindi words and how loanwords have entered and adapted to the Hindi language. The study focuses on phonetic adaptation, morphological assimilation, semantic transformation, sociolinguistic influences, and the role of loanwords—particularly English and Arabic—in modern Indian society. Using a scientific and descriptive approach, the article examines how foreign lexical items have been incorporated into Hindi and how they operate within its linguistic system.

Keywords: Hinglish, Arabic-Persian, Urdu, trade, phonology, civilization, modern technologies, gender, verb construction, morphology, British influence

Hindi (हिन्दी) is among the most widely spoken languages in South Asia. Its long history, grammatical structure, and rich lexicon have developed over centuries of linguistic and cultural interaction. As the Indian subcontinent has historically been a crossroads of civilizations, cultures, empires, and trade routes, the Hindi lexicon has evolved into a diverse and multilayered system, influenced by many external sources. Consequently, Hindi includes numerous

words borrowed from Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic, Turkic languages, Portuguese, English, and others.

Among these borrowings, English and Arabic are two of the most significant sources. Exposure to English increased under British colonial rule, while Arabic words entered Hindi primarily through Muslim governance, commerce, religious influence, and Persian mediation. English loanwords dominate most areas of contemporary life, whereas Arabic borrowings are more commonly preserved in religious, legal, social, and cultural contexts.

Loanwords from English: Historical Context and General Characteristics

After India became part of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, English became essential for administration, education, industry, transportation, communication, and daily life. This historical process greatly increased the influx of English loanwords into Hindi. In quantity, English borrowings now exceed Arabic or Persian loanwords.

Arabic loanwords, in contrast, are primarily used in religious rituals, formal discourse, literary works, and historical texts.

Phonetic Adaptation of English Loanwords

When English words enter Hindi, several phonetic processes typically occur:

Words are adapted to the phonological system of Hindi:

computer → कंप्यूटर (kampyūṭar)

bus → बस (bas)

Complex consonant clusters are simplified:

school → स्कूल (sakūl / skūl)

station → स्टेशन (sṭeśan)

In some cases, an additional vowel is added at the end of the word:

class → क्लास (klās)

bank → बैंक (baiṅk)

These adaptations illustrate Hindi's ability to incorporate foreign words while preserving its phonetic rules.

Morphological Integration

English loanwords are freely combined with native Hindi grammatical markers:

Gender assignment in nouns:

file → फ़ाइल (fãil) – feminine

bus → बस (bas) – feminine

Plural formation using -eñ / -o:

buses → बसें (basen)

forms → फ़ॉर्म्स (forms)

Verb formation: English words are combined with Hindi verbal auxiliaries:

to check → चेक करना (check karna)

to call → कॉल करना (call karna)

These examples demonstrate the full grammatical integration of English words into Hindi.

Functional Domains of English Loanwords

Technology and IT: computer, internet, file, mouse, mobile

Education and Science: student, class, subject, exam

Economy and Business: bank, loan, market, manager

Transportation: train, truck, bus, signal

Daily Life: table, shirt, fan, soap

Although borrowed, these words are adapted to Hindi pronunciation, spelling, and grammar.

Arabic-Persian Loanwords: Historical and Linguistic Features

Arabic words entered Hindi through Persian mediation during the Mughal era, Islamic influence, and trade routes. The mixed Arabic-Persian literary style, closely associated with Urdu, also contributed to this lexical layer.

Arabic loanwords have a long tradition in Hindi and are widely used in religious, spiritual, political, and legal contexts.

Phonetic Adaptation of Arabic Loanwords

Words transmitted via Persian often retain Persian-influenced pronunciation:

तारीख़ (tarīkh) ← تاریخ

हक़ (haq) ← حق

क़ानून (kānūn) ← قانون

साबुन (sābun) ← صابون

ताज (tāj) ← تاج

Hindi phonology has incorporated several borrowed consonants:

q → क़ / क

ḥ → ह

ġ → ग़ / ग

f → फ़ / फ

kh → ख़ / ख

Morphological Adaptation

Arabic-Persian loanwords take Hindi gender, plural, and possession markers:

इबादत (ibādat) — worship

Plural: इबादतें (ibādaten)

क़ानून (kānūn) — law

Plural: क़ानूनों (kānūnon)

हक़ (haq) — right

Plural: हक़ों (haqon)

This reflects the effective assimilation of Arabic words into Hindi grammar.

Major thematic groups of Arabic loanwords include:

Religious terms: ibadat, kalam, haram, halal

Legal terminology: qanun, adalat, haq, shart

Social and everyday terms: sabun, waqt, daftar

Philosophical and academic terms: tarikh, hukm, kalpana

Arabic loanwords often create a symbolic, spiritual, and intellectual semantic layer in Hindi.

Comparative Analysis of English and Arabic Loanwords

Domains of usage:

English: technology, education, business, communication

Arabic: law, religion, spirituality, literature, politics

In terms of semantics, English loanwords generally retain their meanings, whereas Arabic loanwords sometimes expand semantically. For example:

अदालत (adalat) — retains "court" or "justice" but may imply moral judgment in Hindi

वक़्त (waqt) — primarily "time" but can also mean "opportunity"

Stylistic differences:

English loanwords convey modernity, technicality, and formality

Arabic loanwords indicate elevated, spiritual, literary, or religious style

Sociolinguistic Aspects

Urbanization has promoted the use of English loanwords, which carry social prestige in cities. Common words include office, meeting, laptop, and manager.

Modern Indian society often employs a Hindi-English mixed language, Hinglish, e.g.:

"कल ऑफिस में मीटिंग है, तुम टाइम पर आ जाना"

(Kal office me meeting hai, tum time par aa jana.)

Arabic-Persian-Hindi mixtures, on the other hand, appear mainly in social and cultural contexts.

Loanwords from English and Arabic-Persian are crucial components of the Hindi lexicon. English borrowings are closely associated with modern education, daily life, and economic activities, while Arabic-Persian borrowings reflect historical, legal, religious, and cultural heritage.

The coexistence of these layers demonstrates the adaptability and dynamic evolution of Hindi. Despite external linguistic influences, Hindi consistently integrates foreign elements according to its phonological, morphological, and stylistic principles, proving its historical depth and contemporary flexibility.

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