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Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Verb “Ait” Valence in the Mamluk-Kipchak Language

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the historical and comparative aspects of the verb *ait* (“to say”) in the 14th-century Mamluk-Kipchak monument *Gulistan bit Turki*, translated by Seyf-i Sarayi. The study focuses on the valency of the verb as a key category determining its syntactic and semantic potential. Through corpus-based analysis of more than 1,300 tokens, the research identifies the structural patterns of *ait* in relation to its actants—subject, object, addressee, and modifier and compares them with modern Kazakh usage. The results demonstrate that *ait* historically exhibited a high degree of valency, forming up to six-actant structures, while maintaining syntactic stability. In medieval Turkic, *ait* functioned as a multivalent lexeme encompassing meanings such as “to say,” “to command,” “to declare,” and “to confess,” which in modern Kazakh have differentiated into several verbs (*aytu, soyleu, deu, zhariyalau, buyruu, moyyndau*). This semantic narrowing illustrates a diachronic process in which syntactic frameworks remain conservative, whereas semantic roles undergo specialization. The analysis also highlights how valency reflects not only grammatical combinability but also sociocultural patterns of communication characteristic of the Mamluk-Kipchak era. By tracing the historical evolution of the verb *ait*, the study contributes to understanding the mechanisms of syntactic continuity and semantic differentiation in the development of the Kazakh language and Turkic verbal systems in general.

Keywords: Linguistic Valence; Actant Structure; Combinability; Semantic Syntax; Syntactic Valence; Semantic Valence; Verb “Ait”; Mamluk-Kipchak Written Language

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1. Introduction

The issue of valency in linguistic units is one of the topical subjects in linguistics. Among them, the valency properties of verbs are considered an important object of research in linguistics and Turkology. This is because the verb is the main core of the sentence. It enters into various actant relations both semantically and syntactically, thereby revealing the structural and semantic features of each language. Valency, as one of the basic concepts of semantic syntax, determines the possibilities of word combinations and the laws of combinability in the sentence. Considering valency means studying the word, its combinations, and the sentence. The verb serves as the center of both syntax and semantics in this structure^[1]. The ability of verbs in the sentence to connect and combine with other words is measured by the theory of valency. Although there are different views on the essence of valency theory, it is generally recognized that this concept is mainly related to the semantic content of the verb^[2]. This shows that valency is based on the syntactic-semantic relations of the verb^[3]. M. Perini interprets the determination of verb valency as understanding the inner semantic potential of the words expressing that action^[4]. Analyzing the concept of “valency” as the object of semantic syntax, K. Willems states that it is impossible to study lexical semantics without understanding the syntactic structure of the language^[5]. J. Semecky notes that the verb is an essential element of syntax and, compared to other parts of speech, it has a higher degree of polysemy^[6]. At the same time, verbs are rich in grammatical forms, that is, they have a high ability to come in different forms and connect with different words^[7]. Thus, valency is the key concept of semantic syntax. If valency is the internal potential of a word, then syntactic relation is its realization. Valency is a linguistic unit, while syntactic relation is a “speech unit.” Valency is meaning; syntactic relation is phenomenon. Valency is cause; syntactic relation is result^[8]. Three levels of Valence are mentioned in linguistics: logical, semantic, and syntactic^[9]. Therefore, valency is the “capacity” of a word that enables the establishment of syntactic relations and the connection of words with one another.

The concept of valency, first introduced by Lucien Tesnière in the 1950s, has since evolved into one of the core notions of modern functional and cognitive linguistics. In agglutinative languages such as Turkic, where grammatical

relations are explicitly marked by morphology, valency serves as a bridge between word formation and syntax. Fillmore's case grammar and subsequent role-and-reference frameworks further deepened the understanding of how semantic roles (agent, patient, experiencer) are realized in sentence structure. Turkic linguistics, scholars such as E. Agmanov, M. Orazov, and G. Syzdykova have emphasized that valency reflects the inner semantic potential of the verb and mirrors the cultural logic of the language. Thus, exploring the valency of *ait* is not only a grammatical task but also a way to reconstruct the cognitive and communicative world-view of medieval speakers. In this respect, *Gulistan bit Turki* provides a unique empirical basis for tracing how semantic and syntactic capacities interact in the evolution of Turkic verbal systems.

In Kazakh, the verb *ayt* (“to say”) belongs to the group of highly valent verbs. It connects with actant structures such as subject (who said?), addressee (to whom did he/she say?), object (what did he/she say?), and modification (how? when? where?). These structures are clearly observed not only in modern Kazakh but also in medieval monuments. In this study, the valency of the verb *ayt* in the monument *Gulistan bit Turki* is analyzed. *Gulistan bit Turki* is considered one of the significant examples of the medieval written tradition. Therefore, by studying the language of this monument, it is possible to reveal its continuity with modern Kazakh. The combinability features of forms such as *aytti* (“said”), *aytur* (“says”), *ayttim* (“I said”) found in the text are examined, and their correspondence with the forms in modern Kazakh is considered.

Although valency theory has been widely discussed in Turkic linguistics, this study is the first corpus-based analysis of the verb *ayt* in *Gulistan bit Turki* compared with its modern Kazakh usage. By tracing the historical evolution of its actant structure, the research reveals that syntactic valency remains remarkably stable while semantic roles undergo specialization. This diachronic perspective extends the existing descriptive framework of Turkic valency studies toward an explanatory model of language change.

2. The Degree of Research on the Topic

In recent decades, studies on valency in Turkic languages have increasingly adopted corpus-based and typolog-

ical approaches. For instance, research on Tatar and Uzbek has shown that speech verbs maintain a high degree of structural consistency despite significant semantic diversification. Parallel investigations in Bashkir and Kyrgyz have confirmed the stability of actant frames even in the face of lexical replacement. Digital resources such as the National Corpus of the Kazakh Language and the Turkic Language Corpus Project now make it possible to analyze historical valency systematically across centuries. Within this broader context, the present study fills an important gap by integrating classical philological data from *Gulistan bit Turki* with modern corpus annotation techniques. This combination allows for a precise comparison of syntactic environments and demonstrates how functional categories of medieval Turkic verbs are preserved in modern Kazakh grammar. In modern research, alongside logical-syntactic and lexical-semantic valency, other types such as intonational, associative-phonetic, and stylistic valency have also become objects of study^[10]. In general linguistics, the issue of valency is examined from various aspects: the theoretical foundations of valency, its syntactic and semantic nature, word combinability, and syntagmatic relations.

In modern Kazakh linguistics, there are a number of significant studies devoted to the issue of valency. In this respect, special mention should be made of M. Orazov's *Semantics of the Kazakh Language*^[11], Q. Nurmuhametova's *Syntagmatic Features of Word Combinations in the Pattern "Participle + Noun"*^[12], and G. Syzdykova's *Semantic Valency in the Kazakh Language*^[13].

As for medieval Turkic written monuments, including the text of *Gulistan bit Turki*, they have been analyzed by scholars such as N. Uzluk^[14], A. Battal-Taimas^[15], E. Nadjip^[16], M. Sabyr^[17], B. Sagyndykuly^[18], F. Nurieva^[19], and Kh. Minnegulov^[20]. In 2024, A. Seitbekova's *The "Gülistan Bit Türki" Written Monument: Dictionary, Transcription, Translation*^[21] offered an updated linguistic and lexicographic foundation. In general, in Turkology, particular importance should be attached to A. Karamanlıoğlu's *Gülistan Tercümesi* (Translation of *Gulistan*)^[22].

Recent studies have focused on the cognitive and syntactic aspects of valency, including its stability in historical texts and its development in modern Kazakh. However, verb-specific, corpus-based analyses of Middle Turkic monuments remain scarce. This study addresses that gap by investigat-

ing the verb *ayt* in *Gulistan bit Turki* and comparing it with its modern Kazakh usage to trace historical continuity and semantic change.

Current studies focus on the cognitive aspect of valency, the stability of syntactic relations in historical texts, and their usage in modern Kazakh. Previous research has laid the theoretical foundations of valency in Turkic linguistics^[11–13]. However, verb-specific, corpus-based analyses of Middle Turkic monuments remain scarce. This study addresses that gap by examining the actant structure of the verb *ayt* in *Gulistan bit Turki* and comparing it with modern Kazakh data to trace historical continuity and semantic change.

Previous studies have provided significant insights into the theory of valency in Turkic languages. However, verb-specific corpus-based reconstructions remain limited, particularly for Middle Turkic monuments. This study addresses that gap by focusing on the verb *ayt* in *Gulistan bit Turki* and examining its actant structure and semantic development through historical comparison with modern Kazakh.

3. Materials and Methods

The main material of the research is the text of *Gulistan bit Turki*, one of the medieval Turkic written monuments. This monument is considered an important example of the medieval written tradition of the Turkic peoples and provides an opportunity to study its continuity with modern Kazakh. During the research, the transcription of *Gulistan bit Turki* by A. Karamanlıoğlu^[22] was used. The methodological basis of the study consists of syntactic, semantic, and historical-comparative methods.

The syntactic method was applied to identify the actant structures of the verb *ayt* in the sentence (subject, object, addressee, modifier). The semantic analysis was carried out to examine the dynamics of semantic development of the verb *ayt* and its usage features in the historical context. The historical-comparative method was used to compare the structural features of the verb *ayt* in medieval Turkic and modern Kazakh and to describe their continuity and changes. The corpus-statistical method was applied to calculate the frequency of the verb *ayt* in the text of *Gulistan bit Turki* and to analyze its occurrence in different grammatical forms. These research methods make it possible to study the valency of the verb *ayt* in the historical text and to investigate

its semantic and structural development.

Corpus description and selection criteria.

The corpus used in this research comprises approximately 1,380 tokens of the verb *ayt* and its inflectional forms extracted from the critical edition of *Gulistan bit Turki*. Each token was analyzed for actant structure (subject, object, addressee, modifier), grammatical voice, and surrounding collocational patterns. Contexts with unclear or ambiguous syntax were excluded. For diachronic comparison, a supplementary dataset of 210 tokens was collected from the National Corpus of the Kazakh Language, following the same annotation criteria. This design ensures both accuracy and comparability between the medieval and modern stages.

4. Results

From **Table 1**, it is evident that the use and semantic potential of the verb *ayt* in *Gulistan bit Turki* are much broader than in modern Kazakh. However, in terms of syntactic and syntagmatic relations, as well as valency degree, there are no major differences. Over time, individual lexemes may move into active or passive layers, showing functional-semantic dynamics, while syntactic and syntagmatic relations, together with valency degrees, remain stable. This demonstrates that syntactic relations form the foundation of the language, constitute its enduring framework resistant to change, and reflect patterns of thinking through language.

Table 1. Actant structure of the verb *ayt* in the monument *Gulistan bit Turki*.

Phrase	Agent (Who?)	Patient (What?)	Addressee (To Whom?)	Modifier
fakir aytii	poor	—	—	—
men aytim	I	—	—	—
ol aytii	he/she	—	—	—
oz ozume aytim	I	—	to myself	—
pehlevanga aytim	I	—	to the pehlevan	—
sheyh sadi aytur	Sheikh Sadi	—	—	—
korusmeyin aytim	I	korusmeyin (“do not meet”)	—	—
oze aytii	he/she	—	to himself/herself	—
sen aykil	you	—	—	—
hidmatina kilip aytii	he/she	—	—	—
seyhina aytii	he/she	—	to his/her sheikh	—
atasina aytii	he/she	—	to his/her father	—
undep aytii	he/she	—	—	—
munazara kilip aytii	he/she	—	—	by calling/shouting
nedim-lerine aytii	he/she	—	—	by disputing/debating
bazarina kirip aytur	he/she	—	—	—
kirek aytii	he/she	kirek (“necessity/need”)	—	—
ne tiler aytii	he/she	ne tiler (“what is wished”)	—	—
fakir-larning biri aytii	one of the poor	—	—	—
anga aytii	he/she	—	to him	—
ani aytlar	they	ani (“that/this”)	—	—
muridi-ne aytur	he/she	—	to his disciple	—
oglina aytur	he/she	—	to his son	—
dstolina aytii	he/she	—	to his friend	—
manga aytii	he/she	—	to me	—
razi bolmayin aytii	he/she	—	—	razi bolmayin (“not satisfied”)
itiraz kilip aytii	he/she	—	—	by objecting
yigrip aytii	he/she	—	—	by crying
opup aytii	he/she	—	—	by kissing
melamet kilip aytii	he/she	—	—	by reproaching
kiter vaktin aytim	I	—	kiter vaktin (“departure time”)	—
artinka aytim	I	—	—	afterwards
takatim yok aytii	he/she	takatim yok (“I have no strength”)	—	—
hikmet ni aytii	he/she	hikmet ni (“wisdom”)	—	—
korup aytii	he/she	—	—	upon seeing
usutune kilip aytii	he/she	—	—	by coming close
mesel-ni aytlar	they	mesel-ni (“the matter”)	—	—
dem-be-dem aytur	he/she	—	—	repeatedly/continuously
dunye hayatindan aytim	I	—	—	about worldly life
dagi aytii	he/she	—	—	again

5. Discussion

The comparison between *Gulistan bit Turki* and modern Kazakh clearly shows that while the verb *ayt* retains its fundamental syntactic frame, its semantic scope has narrowed considerably. In the medieval text, *ayt* encompassed meanings equivalent to “to say,” “to command,” “to declare,” “to confess,” and “to speak,” whereas in modern Kazakh these

functions are distributed among several distinct verbs (*aytu*, *soyleu*, *deu*, etc.). This demonstrates that Turkic verb systems tend to preserve structural patterns even as the lexical-semantic load of individual verbs becomes more specialized. The finding highlights the contrast between syntactic stability and semantic change across the historical continuum of the Kazakh language.

The comparison between *Gulistan bit Turki* and modern

Kazakh shows that while the verb *ayt* retains its fundamental syntactic frame, its semantic scope has undergone significant narrowing. In the medieval text, *ayt* expressed a broad range of meanings, including “to speak,” “to command,” “to declare,” and “to confess.” In modern Kazakh, these functions have been redistributed among several distinct verbs (*aytu, soyleu, deu, buyruu, moyndau*). This indicates that while the structural configuration of the verb has remained stable, its semantic domain has specialized, exemplifying the principle that syntactic valency tends to persist even under substantial semantic differentiation.

In the Middle Ages, the usage of the verb *ayt* was much broader than in modern Kazakh. This is evident from historical texts. In the monument *Gulistan bit Turki*, chosen as the object of our study, the verb *ayt* was used in place of the modern verbs *aytu* “to say”, *soyleu* “to speak”, and *deu* “to tell”. While these verbs today differ in functional-stylistic distribution, in the medieval period, most speech verbs were expressed solely through the form *ayt*. This is the result of historical linguistic change and semantic development. In the Explanatory Dictionary of the Kazakh Language, *ayt* is defined as: “to express thought in words, to speak; to dedicate, to address”^[23]. The verbs *deu* and *soyleu* are considered synonyms of *ayt*.

In *Gulistan bit Turki*, the verb *ayt* belongs to the most frequently used words. In the text, it appears in several grammatical forms: *aytti* – 848 times, *aytur* – 204 times, *ayttim* – 168 times, *ayturlar* – 80 times, *aytip* – 16 times, *aykil* – 14 times, *ayttilar* – 12 times, *aytli* – 10 times, *aytkay* – 10 times, *aytma* – 8 times, *aytsa* – 6 times, *aytkan* – 6 times, *aytmak* – 6 times, *aytayim* – 4 times, *aytkaylar* – 4 times, *aytkanu* – 4 times, *aytmadi* – 4 times, *aytmas* – 2 times, *aytmaym* – 2 times, *aytmadim* – 2 times, *aytmagay* – 2 times, *aytmadingiz* – 2 times, *ayt* – 2 times. As can be seen, the functional-semantic potential of *ayt* was high in the medieval period. Its grammatical forms resemble those in modern Kazakh: *aytti* – *ayty* (“said”), *ayttim* – *aytym* (“I said”), *aytur* – *aytar* (“will say”), *aytip* – *aytip* (“saying”), *aytkan* – *aykan* (“said”), *aytmak* – *aitpaq* (“to say”), *aytayim* – *aitamyn* (“I will say”), etc. The text also shows older forms such as *qil* (“to do”) and the suffixes *-kay*-*gay*, now largely lost in standard usage. Some grammatical forms of *ayt* underwent phonetic changes in Kazakh: *aytur* → *aytar*, *aytma* → *aitpa*. The combination of a voiceless t with a nasal m demonstrates that morphophonemic assimila-

tion rules were not yet fully regularized. The plural suffix likewise appears in a single variant.

The verb *ayt* in the monument displays a strong ability to combine with other words, indicating its high degree of valency. In medieval language, *ayt* constructed combinations according to the structures: who said, to whom, what was said, when, how, and from where. Syntactic valency takes into account the ability of any word in the sentence to combine with others^[11]. Due to its polyvalent syntactic valency, *ayt* could appear in a wide variety of actant structures. In linguistics, the words that combine with the central element of the clause are called actants, and their number is a key criterion in determining valency degree^[11]. Actants include agent (subject, “who”), patient (object, “what”), addressee (“to whom”), and modifiers (adverbials of “how, when, where”). In *Gulistan bit Turki*, *ayt* accommodates all these actants.

From the 40 verb phrases we analyzed, the distribution of actants can be summarized as follows:

- Agents: *men* (“I”), *sen* (“you”), *ol* (“he/she”), *fakir* (“poor”), *sheyh sadi* (“Sheikh Sadi”), *fakir-larning biri* (“one of the poor”)
- Patients: *korusmeyin* (“do not meet”), *kirek* (“necessity/need”), *ne tiler* (“what is wished”), *ani* (“that/this”), *takatim yok* (“I have no strength”), *hikmet ni* (“wisdom”), *mesel-ni* (“the matter”)
- Addressees: *oz-ozume* (“to myself”), *pehlevanga* (“to the pehleven”), *oze* (“to himself/herself”), *seyhina* (“to his/her sheikh”), *atasina* (“to his/her pater”), *nedimlerine* (“to his companions”), *anga* (“to him”), *muridine* (“to his disciple”), *oglina* (“to his son”), *dostina* (“to his friend”)
- Modifiers: *hidmatina kilip* (“by coming into his service”), *undep* (“by calling/shouting”), *munazara kilip* (“by disputing/debating”), *bazarina kirip* (“by enter the bazar”), *razi bolmayin* (“not satisfied”), *itiraz kilip* (“by objecting”), *yigrip* (“by crying”), *opup* (“by kissing”), *melamet kilip* (“by reproaching”), *artinca* (“afterwards”), *korup* (“upon seeing”), *usutune kilip* (“by coming close”), *dem-be-dem* (“repeatedly/continuously”), *dunye hayatindan* (“about worldly life”), *dagi* (“again”).

This shows that the verb *ayt* in the monument can take all six degrees of valency:

1. One-valent: *ol aytty* (“he said”)
2. Two-valent: *atasina aytty* (“he said to his father”)
3. Three-valent: *mesel-ni aytty* (“he said the matter”)
4. Four-valent: *undep aytty* (“he said by calling”)
5. Five-valent: *artinca aytty* (“he said afterwards”)
6. Six-valent: *dunye hayatindan aytty* (“he said from worldly life”)

Thus, the syntactic valency of *ayt* in the monument corresponds to its usage in modern Kazakh. In contemporary Kazakh, the verb appears in one-, two-, or three-actant structures: *ol aytty* (“he said”), *onga aytty* (“he said to him”), *oni aytty* (“he said it”), *dala-dan aytty* (“he said from outside”), *karap turyp aytty* (“he said while watching”), *keshe aytty* (“he said yesterday”). This shows that *ayt* has remained syntactically stable. However, in medieval Turkic, the semantic valency of *ayt* was broader. It covered meanings now differentiated in Kazakh by verbs like *aytu*, *soyleu*, *deu*, *zhariyalau* (“to proclaim”), *buyruu* (“to order”), *moyyndau* (“to confess”), *talap etu* (“to demand”). For example, *itiraz kilip aytty* meant “to object,” *munazara kilip aytty* meant “to debate,” and *melamet kilip aytty* meant “to proclaim.” Today these are expressed by different verbs. This shows that while the lexical layer is dynamic, shifting between active and passive usage, the syntactic framework remains stable, forming the “skeleton” of speech.

Beyond purely linguistic regularities, the stability of the valency pattern of *ayt* can also be viewed in relation to the sociocultural context of the Mamluk-Kipchak era. In that society, speech and communication reflected social hierarchy, respect, and etiquette norms that shaped the way actants – especially subjects and addressees – were expressed in discourse. As noted by Kasap^[24], the realization of valency and speech acts in Turkic languages often encodes sociolinguistic roles and pragmatic relations between speaker and listener. This perspective reveals that linguistic continuity is intertwined with cultural continuity across the centuries.

These findings confirm that in the diachronic development of Turkic languages, syntactic valency tends to remain stable even when semantic functions undergo narrowing or redistribution. The case of the verb *ayt* thus exemplifies how language change operates primarily through meaning specialization rather than through structural transformation.

In modern Kazakh, the verb “*ayt*” is used only in the meaning of informing, delivering, and other shades of the

speech process are transmitted by such verbs as *soyleu* “speak”, *deu* “say”, *zhariyalau* “declare”. Since there was no such stylistic differentiation in the medieval Turkic language, “*ayt*” played a generalized semantic role. This suggests that in the course of historical development, a semantic classification took place in the language system, and the semantic load of the verb “*ayt*” in the Middle Ages was divided into several verbs in the modern Kazakh language. About such phenomena E. Agmanov argued: “words that cannot be combined with each other at the same time acquire the ability to combine in later stages”^[25]. The connection of words and their logical combination depends primarily on the semantic capabilities of language units^[8]. Therefore, we can say that the semantic possibility of the verb “*ayt*” in modern use is narrowed. For example, I told a lesson. He spoke on stage. Mom said, “I’ll come to the party”. In the modern Kazakh language, the relationship of speech verbs is found in such phrases as “*dep aytty*” (“said”), “*dep söyledi*” (“he said”), “*aytamin dedi*” (“said I say”), “*aytatinin aytty*” (“said he would say”), “*aytamin dep aytty*” (“said to say”). In the monument “*Gulistan bit Turki*”, there is also a self-connection of the verb “*ayt*”. For example, *tutur-men aytty aytkil aytlim*. Here, the verb “*ayt*” comes three times in a row and establishes a relationship. Since the verb “*ayt*” is used instead of most modern speech verbs, the interword conjunction “*ayt*” is given in the form “*aytkil aytty*”.

The semantic combinability of words derives from human figurative thinking, the ability to compare and analogize, i.e., the ethnolinguistic worldview is verbalized through valency^[26]. Thus, the laws of semantic compatibility are not only linguistic phenomena but also reflections of cognition and ethnocultural perception. This is especially evident in metaphorical and metonymic usages. For instance, the collocation *dem-be-dem aytty* (“repeatedly/continuously”) is explained by Karamanlioglu^[22] as “*zaman zaman*” (“from time to time”). Here, *dem* means “time,” while the morpheme -be adds intensification, similar to modern Kazakh compounds *kozbe-koz* (“face to face”), *sozbe-soz* (“word for word”), and *dalme-dal* (“exactly”). Another example is the metaphorical collocation *dunye hayatindan aytlim* (“I said from worldly life”), where *ayt* is linked with an ablative form unusual in Kazakh. In modern usage, ablative combinations like “*terezeden aytlim*” (“I said from the window”) shift semantically to the adverbial “how.” In contrast, the medieval phrase reflects metaphorical thinking, where *dunye*

hayatindan functions as a figurative source.

The verb *ayt* also combines with complex words and phrasal expressions: e.g., *kiter vaktin ayttim* (“I said the departure time”) combines with a compound object, and *takatim yok aytti* (“he said ‘I have no strength’”) shows its role as equivalent to modern *dedi* (“said”).

The concept of valency is closely related to “syntagm,” which expresses the actual structural relations of words in context. Valency defines the potential for word combination, while syntagm shows its realization. According to Orazov^[11], syntagmatic relations are directly linked to valency and play an important role in forming syntactic units. In Gulistan bit Turki, syntagmatic relations with *ayt* can be classified as:

- Predicative syntagms: *fakir aytti* (“the poor said”), *men ayttim* (“I said”)
- Object syntagms: *ne tiler aytti* (“he said what do you wish”), *mesel-ni ayturlar* (“he said the matter”)
- Addressee syntagms: *muridi-ne aytur* (“he said to his disciple”), *dostina aytti* (“he said to his friend”)
- Adverbial syntagms: *itiraz kilip aytti* (“he objected and said”), *hidmatina kilip aytti* (“he served and said”)

A notable feature is that adverbial syntagms often involve the auxiliary verb *qil* (“to do”), e.g., ... *qilip aytti* (“said by doing ...”). In modern Kazakh, this construction is rare, since *etu* (“to do/make”) has largely replaced *qil*. This demonstrates that while syntactic structures remain stable, lexical auxiliaries may shift across time.

The pragmatic function of the verb *ayt* in medieval contexts was broader, encompassing not only speech but also social acts of command, confession, and blessing. Such multi-functionality reflects the socio-ethical system of the Mamluk-Kipchak society, in which language served as an instrument of hierarchy and politeness. Compared to modern Kazakh, where *aytu* has become semantically narrowed and pragmatically neutral, medieval usage reveals higher levels of performativity. These observations suggest that the stability of valency is accompanied by a gradual semantic specialization, mirroring cultural change in communicative behavior.

6. Conclusions

The results of the study show that in medieval Turkic, the verb *ayt* possessed far broader semantic and syntactic valency than in its modern Kazakh usage. The application

of *ayt* in various actant structures in the monument Gulistan bit Turki demonstrated that it functioned as a six-valent lexeme. This indicates its high level of combinability in the sentence and its frequent occurrence in different grammatical forms. In medieval Turkic, *ayt* encompassed multiple meanings now distributed among several verbs in modern Kazakh, such as *aytu* (“to say”), *soyleu* (“to speak”), *deu* (“to tell”), *zhariyalau* (“to proclaim”), *buyruu* (“to order”), *moyndau* (“to confess”), and *talap etu* (“to demand”). While the syntactic valency of this verb has remained unchanged, its semantic scope has narrowed over time.

In the medieval period, most speech verbs were expressed only in the form *ayt*, whereas in modern Kazakh, the semantic load has been divided among several verbs, resulting in semantic differentiation within the language system. Syntactic analysis revealed continuity between the medieval and modern usage of *ayt*: in the medieval written text, the verb appears in one-, two-, and three-actant structures. Moreover, in the Middle Ages, it was frequently combined with modifiers, expressing how, where, and when an action was performed. This demonstrates the stability of syntactic relations and the unbroken structural continuity of the Kazakh language.

The findings of this historical study confirm that lexical changes are dynamic in nature, while syntactic relations and the valency system remain stable. The broad semantic capacity of the verb *ayt* in medieval texts represents one of the significant features in the historical development of the Kazakh language. These conclusions provide a basis for further exploration of valency, semantic differentiation, and structural continuity in the evolution of Kazakh.

The text of Gulistan bit Turki holds a special place in Turkic linguistics as one of the earliest Middle Turkic monuments representing the Mamluk-Kipchak literary tradition. Its linguistic system demonstrates a transitional stage between Old Kipchak and the emerging regional variants of Turkic that later developed into modern Kazakh and Karakalpak. Therefore, the study of its verbal system provides valuable insights into the evolution of syntactic and semantic mechanisms common to Turkic languages. Within this corpus, the verb *ayt* occupies a central role, functioning not only as a lexical unit of communication but also as a discourse-structuring device that connects direct speech, narration, and moral instruction. The frequent occurrence of *ayt* in different syntactic environments makes it an ideal candidate for

analyzing valency structure and argument realization in a historical context. Moreover, the cultural and ethical nature of Gulistan bit Turki enhances the interpretive potential of linguistic analysis, as it reflects how speech acts were embedded within moral and pedagogical communication patterns typical of medieval Turkic society.

The study demonstrates that historical valency analysis can serve as an effective tool for understanding the mechanisms of language continuity. Future research may extend this approach to other high-frequency communication verbs, enabling a broader typological comparison across Turkic languages. The diachronic stability of *ayt* supports the assumption that Turkic syntax is evolutionarily conservative, while semantic change proceeds through gradual functional differentiation.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, K.K. and G.B.; methodology, K.K.; software, A.Z.; validation, S.S., M.Y. and O.A.; formal analysis, K.K. and A.Z.; investigation, G.B.; resources, A.Z. and O.A.; data curation, G.B.; writing—original draft preparation, K.K. and A.Z.; writing—review and editing, G.B.; visualization, S.S. and M.Y.; supervision, K.K. and A.Z.; project administration, G.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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