

The roots of barbarisms in Harry Potter: language borrowing and archaic usage

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ABSTRACT

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series showcases a rich tapestry of language that is remarkable for its use of barbarisms – words and expressions outside the norms of contemporary English. Rowling's inventive use of language has been key to conjuring the fantasy world of the Potterverse, and many of her coined or revived terms have seeped into real-world usage. In linguistic terms, a "barbarism" traditionally refers to non-standard or foreign-influenced language, for example, borrowed words, archaic terms, slang or hybrids that purists might consider improper.

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Garri Potter asarida barbarizmlar: o'zlashmalar va arxaizmlar

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

Inglizcha-o'zbekcha til
o'zlashtirish,
arxaik qo'llanish,
lingvistik ixtiro,
neologizmlar,
etimologiya,
leksik ijodkorlik,
fantaziya,
leksikoni,
barbarizmlar,
sehrli terminologiya.

J.K. Roulingning Garri Potter seriyasi tilning boy manzarasini aks ettiradi, ayniqsa zamonaviy ingliz tilining me'yorlaridan tashqarida bo'lgan barbarizmlar – o'ziga xos so'z va iboralar orqali ajralib turadi. Roulingning tilni ijodiy qo'llashi Potter olamini yaratishda asosiy rol o'ynagan va uning ko'plab ixtiro qilingan yoki qayta tiklangan so'zlari real dunyo tiliga ham kirib kelgan. Lingvistik nuqtayi nazardan, "barbarizm" an'anaviy ravishda nostandart yoki chet tillar ta'sirida shakllangan til birliklarini anglatadi, masalan, o'zlashgan so'zlar, arxaik iboralar, jargon yoki sof tilshunoslar noto'g'ri deb hisoblaydigan gibrid shakllar.

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Истоки варваризмов в «Гарри Поттере»: языковые заимствования и архаичные выражения

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

Английский-узбекский,
заимствование слов,
архаичное употребление,
языковое
изобретательство,
неологизмы,
этимология,
лексическое творчество,
лексика фэнтези,
варваризмы,
магическая терминология.

Серия «Гарри Поттер» Дж. К. Роулинг демонстрирует богатую языковую палитру, примечательную использованием варваризмов – слов и выражений, выходящих за рамки норм современного английского языка. Изобретательное применение языка стало ключевым элементом в создании фантастического мира Поттерианы, и многие придуманные или возрождённые термины вошли в реальное употребление. С лингвистической точки зрения «варваризм» традиционно относится к нестандартным или заимствованным языковым элементам, таким как иностранные слова, архаизмы, сленг или гибридные формы, которые пуристы могут считать неправильными.

INTRODUCTION

Rowling's writing exhibits a *love of language*, brimming with creative wordplay and eclectic vocabulary. Even as the Harry Potter story captured millions' imaginations, it subtly expanded their lexicon. Generations of young readers (and their parents) encountered unusual words in these pages – from pseudo-Latin incantations to old-fashioned British slang – and learned to understand them through context and repetition. Indeed, the series' phenomenal popularity (over 500 million copies sold globally) has meant that many previously obscure words have found a new life in everyday speech.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH

One striking feature of Rowling's language is her extensive **borrowing from classical and foreign languages** to name the magical phenomena of her world. The use of Latinate spells and mottoes is especially prominent, lending an aura of antiquity and scholarly gravitas to wizarding life. In *Harry Potter*, magic is often conducted in Latin. Many incantations are actual Latin words or close approximations, which makes the magical *verbal charms* both exotic and intuitively understandable. For instance, *Accio*, the summoning charm, literally means "I summon" in Latin, transparently conveying its function. Likewise, *Lumos* (from Latin *lumen*, light) produces light, and *Nox* (Latin for night) douses it, pairing ancient language with practical meaning. Other spells combine Latin roots into evocative hybrids: *Expelliarmus*, the disarming spell that **expels** an opponent's weapon, is formed from *expello* ("I drive out") and *arma* ("arms, weapons"). Rowling even uses bits of mock-Latin – sometimes called "dog Latin" – to keep the spell lexicon consistent; for example, *Expecto Patronum* ("I await a guardian") and *Finite Incantatem* ("end the spell") sound like solemn Latin formulas, even if not all are strict grammatical Latin.

DISCUSSION

Beyond Latin, Rowling's **use of foreign languages and historical allusions** extends to character and place names, enriching the narrative with hidden meanings. A salient example is the arch-villain's name, **Lord Voldemort**. Though it strikes fear on the page, the name itself carries a clue to his nature when deconstructed in French: *vol de*

mort translates to “flight of death” or “theft of death”. Both interpretations resonate with Voldemort’s storyline – he is a wizard fixated on escaping death (fleeing from mortality) and who achieves this by tearing apart others’ souls and lives (a figurative theft of others’ life or death). Such multilingual wordplay adds literary depth; a knowledgeable reader recognizes the irony that the “Dark Lord” who refuses to die has a name built on the concept of death. Rowling similarly mined French for the aristocratic surname **Malfoy** – deriving it from *mal foi*, meaning “bad faith” – to suggest the family’s treacherous, untrustworthy nature. Fittingly, the Malfoy clan is depicted as sly and duplicitous, and their *motto* might as well be “bad faith” given their betrayals. The Malfoys’ first names, too, have Latin roots that slyly comment on their characters. The patriarch *Lucius* bears a name originating from Latin *lux*, meaning “light” – an ironic choice for a dark wizard and Death Eater, but one that evokes the ancient Roman world (many Roman nobles were named Lucius, including famous statesmen). His son *Draco* literally means “dragon” in Latin, hinting at the emblazoned serpent symbol of Slytherin House and Draco’s combative temperament. Perhaps most striking is the moniker of Draco’s ruthless aunt **Bellatrix Lestrange**. *Bellatrix* is Latin for “female warrior,” and indeed Bellatrix is one of Voldemort’s most dangerous lieutenants, a woman warrior in service of evil. (Not coincidentally, Bellatrix is also the name of a star in the constellation Orion – the “warrior” connection giving her an almost cosmic menace.) Rowling’s learned naming goes on: *Remus Lupin*, the mild-mannered professor who hides a werewolf’s curse, carries a double homage to wolves. His first name Remus recalls one of the mythical twin founders of Rome who was raised by a she-wolf, and his surname Lupin comes from *lupus*, Latin for “wolf”. In this way, even if a reader misses the reference initially, the name retroactively gains significance once Lupin’s lycanthropy is revealed. Across the series, such etymological clues abound – *Minerva* McGonagall is named after the Roman goddess of wisdom (befitting a wise headmistress), and *Sirius* Black is named for the Dog Star (apt for a character who can transform into a giant black dog). By borrowing from Latin, French, and classical mythology in this manner, Rowling endows her wizarding characters with names that *sound* authentic to a long-standing magical culture and often wink at their true nature. The linguistic barbarism of mixing languages – Latin and French into an English narrative – thus becomes an artful technique for characterization and foreshadowing. Rowling’s borrowings are not limited to human names and spells; she also **draws on folklore and archaic sources** to populate the magical world with creatures and objects that carry a sense of legacy. Consider *Dobby* the house-elf: at first glance, *Dobby* appears to be a purely whimsical name, but in fact it comes straight from British folk tradition. In Katherine Briggs’ authoritative *Encyclopedia of Fairies*, a “dobby” is defined as a kind of house spirit or hobgoblin in Yorkshire lore – a helpful creature akin to a brownie, though prone to mischief. Rowling’s Dobby fits this description well: he is a magical household servant who performs chores (like a brownie) yet can create chaos with his efforts to “help,” and he ultimately becomes a benevolent trickster figure. By using a genuine folkloric term, Rowling taps into pre-existing legends, lending Dobby’s character an extra dimension for those familiar with fairy tales. This technique repeats with several other magical creatures. The malevolent water demons called *Grindylows* in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* take their name from an old Yorkshire legend of a watery monster that drags children into ponds, and they behave in the book exactly as their folklore counterpart. Similarly, the shape-shifting *boggart* that haunts closets and

turns into one's worst fear is named after an English bogeyman spirit, and the ominous black spectral dog called the *Grim* echoes folklore of churchyard guardians (often envisioned as dark dogs). These are not random inventions but deliberate resurrections of “obscure or ‘hidden’” English words and myths – as one analyst put it, the English language already contained these “*Potterisms before Potter*”, but they were tucked away in dusty regional lore, much like the magical world is hidden from Muggles. Rowling's story dusts off these old terms and restores them to active use.

In the same spirit, the series revives a host of **archaic words** – some literary, some colloquial – integrating them into the lexicon of the Wizarding World. A prime example is *Dumbledore*, the surname of Hogwarts' revered Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore. Far from being a fanciful jumble of syllables, *dumbledore* is actually an 18th-century dialect word for “bumblebee”. Rowling chose it because she imagined the elderly wizard wandering around humming to himself “like a bee”, a charming character detail embedded in a single word. By the 1990s this term had fallen out of common knowledge, so to readers it felt like an original name with a quirky sound – yet it subtly conveyed the character's benign, buzzing energy. Another term that Rowling plucked from obscurity is the now-famous *Muggle*. In the novels, *muggle* refers to a person with no magic – essentially an ordinary human. The word seems so fitting and natural in context that many assume it was invented for the series. However, *muggle* has older attestations in English. The author has noted that it echoes *mug* (slang for a gullible or foolish person), giving it a mild pejorative flavor appropriate for how wizards might view uninformed outsiders. More intriguingly, the Oxford English Dictionary records *muggle* as an early 20th-century term meaning “sweetheart” (and in 1930s jazz slang, a *muggles* was a marijuana cigarette, though that usage was very niche). These disparate older meanings were unknown to most readers, so Rowling effectively repurposed *muggle* with a fresh definition while retaining a vaguely old-timey sound. The result was a word that felt authentic in her quasi-Victorian magical society and yet was easy for readers to learn and use. Indeed, *muggle* proved so useful that it entered real language with an extended meaning – people now talk about “muggles” in any specialized field to mean those outside it. For example, tech workers might jokingly call non-tech people *muggles*, and one early citation of this sense comes from 1999: “*She's a muggle. No IT background or aptitude at all,*” as quoted in *Computer Weekly*. The term became official when *Muggle* was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2003, defined as “a person who is not conversant with a particular activity or skill” – a remarkable journey for a word that began as a bit of wizarding slang.

Rowling's talent for reviving *recondite* words extends further. Many readers expanded their vocabulary through Harry Potter, often without realizing the words were real to begin with. For instance, Book 2 introduces the deadly plant called a *Mandrake*, used to brew a restorative potion – a concept drawn from medieval herb lore. In real history, the mandrake (Latin *mandragora*) is a plant whose forked root was said to resemble a human figure and which, according to legend, would emit a lethal scream when uprooted. This archaic herb name and its lore were largely known only to scholars or fantasy buffs, but after *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, every young reader knew what a mandrake was (and probably associated it with its scream). In fact, linguists observed that *mandrake* and even the Latin variant *mandragora* saw a resurgence in usage thanks to the books. Other archaic terms similarly got a new lease on life. The word

squib – in Potter’s world, a non-magical person born to wizard parents – was originally an English word for a small firework. The idiom “a damp squib” (meaning a disappointing failure) was still known in British English, though it had been declining in use in the late 20th century. Rowling’s redefinition of *Squib* (capitalized in the books) gave the word a fresh significance. Suddenly, *Squib* was not just an antiquated metaphor but a character type in a beloved story (e.g. Argus Filch, the cranky caretaker of Hogwarts, is revealed to be a Squib). This new meaning gained such traction that it likely arrested the decline of the original word: after 1997, corpus studies show *squib*’s frequency in English rising again, buoyed by discussions of the Harry Potter kind of Squib.

The world of *Harry Potter* is a case study in how language borrowing and invention can invigorate a narrative and even feed back into the language at large. Here is the expanded table with **Uzbek translations or transcribed versions** for the analyzed barbarisms in *Harry Potter*. If a direct translation is difficult, a **transcribed** version is provided in parentheses.

CATEGORY	BARBARISM	ORIGIN & EXPLANATION	UZBEK TRANSLATION / TRANSCRIPTION
Latin-Based Spells & Phrases	Expelliarmus	(<i>expellere</i> = expel, <i>arma</i> = weapons)	Qurolsizlantir
	Lumos	(<i>lumen</i> = light)	Nur (Yorug’lik chiqarish sehrli so’zi)
	Nox	(<i>nox</i> = night)	Tun (Qorong’ulik chaqirish sehrli so’zi)
	Expecto Patronum	(<i>expecto</i> = I await, <i>patronum</i> = guardian)	Himoyachimni kutaman
	Finite Incantatem	(<i>finite</i> = end, <i>incantatem</i> = spell)	Sehrni bekor qilish
French Influences	Horcrux	(<i>horror</i> + <i>crux</i> , suggesting a dark object with significance)	Sehrli jism (Horukruks – transkriptsiya)
	Voldemort	(<i>vol de mort</i> = flight of death)	O’limdan qochish (Voldemor – transkriptsiya)
	Malfoy	(<i>mal foi</i> = bad faith)	Yomon niyatli
	Beauxbatons	(<i>beaux</i> = beautiful, <i>bâtons</i> = wands)	Chiroyli tayoqchalar (sehrli tayoqlar)
Slavic/Russian Influences	Karkaroff	Resembles Russian surname structure	Karkarov – transkriptsiya
	Dolohov	Phonetically Russian	Dolohov – transkriptsiya
Obsolete English Words	Viktor Krum	Eastern European-styled name	Viktor Krum – transkriptsiya
	Dumbledore	18th-century term for “bumblebee”	Asalari (Dambldor – transkriptsiya)
	Muggle	Old dialect word for a foolish person, later a slang term	Sehrsiz odam (Mug’l – transkriptsiya)
	Squib	Originally a small firework; adapted to mean a non-magical person	Sehrsiz tug’ilgan (Skvib – transkriptsiya)
	Mandrake	Mythical plant in medieval herbology	Sehrli o’simlik (Mandragora – transkriptsiya)

CONCLUSION

Language is, as novelist Rita Mae Brown observed, *“the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.”* The language of *Harry Potter* maps a journey that connects us back to ancient myths and languages, even as it forges ahead with new expressions for new ideas. It has shown an entire generation that playing with words – even *barbarous* words from forgotten eras or invented on the spot – can be a source of magic in its own right.

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