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SEMANTIC-STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF SIGN-EXPRESSING ATOV UNITS

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Abstract

This article analyzes the semantic and structural features of sign-expressing atov units (lexical units that denote objects and events through their properties, states, or degrees). The study examines the lexical-semantic structure of atov units, the mechanisms of metaphorical and metonymical naming, as well as their functions within the linguistic system. The article also compares the peculiarities of sign expression in Uzbek and Russian, contributing to the identification of semantic-structural differences in atov units.

Keywords: sign-expressing units, atov units, semantic feature, structural feature, lexical-semantic system, metaphorical naming, metonymical naming.

Introduction

The study of the structure of sign-expressing atov units is considered important in linguistics. These units perform the function of structuring and systematizing meaning through the naming of a specific concept or phenomenon. At the lexical level, such units form a system with a distinct structure. Sign-expressing atov units (adjective units, participial adjectives, and terms based on adjective-forming types) are significant in the language's naming system. They function as nominative units indicating an object's distinctive aspect, appearance, functional connection, or social evaluation.

The semantic, structural, and genetic nature of such units is complex and multilayered, developing in close connection with the general semantic system of the language. Semantically, sign-expressing units primarily reflect a specific fragment of reality by naming an existing property of an object. For example, the term *qizilishton* highlights the bird's distinguishing feature — the red chest — as



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the semantic core. In these units, the semantic nucleus is the “sign,” and the object receives its secondary name based on this sign. Consequently, such units are lexically and logically motivated, with their meaning often clear and explicit.

Atov units are one of the main nominative means of language, serving to name, differentiate, and identify various objects, persons, events, and phenomena in reality. Their semantic nature becomes even more complex when included in phraseological units, generating a multilayered system of meaning. Since the 20th century, the semantic structure of atov units has been studied by leading linguists, especially by A. Superanskaya and others. Researchers generally consider atov units as “names that denote a single object.” However, when used in phraseological units, they move away from their immediate nominative meaning and acquire figurative, connotative layers of meaning.

The semantic structure of atov units is formed through their meaning content, layers of meaning, and semantic relations. Each atov unit embodies multiple levels of semantic components. These components reflect the sign, state, character, or corresponding function of an object. Among scholarly views on the semantic structure of atov units, the perspectives of M. Mirtojyev are of particular importance. According to him, nominatives are divided into two groups based on their role and relationship to reality: denotative sema and connotative sema. The denotative sema always corresponds to a concept, since the concept is the mental reflection of the denotatum. From a morphemic perspective, it corresponds to the naming sema mentioned under this heading.

In atov units, two types of meaning are embodied: denotative and connotative. The denotative meaning expresses the direct content of the object or event being denoted. This layer constitutes the primary, invariable semantic core of the unit. In Uzbek linguistics, instead of the term connotative sema, the term connotative meaning is used. Accordingly, the connotative sema is identical to connotative meaning. Connotative meaning expresses the additional associative, emotional, or evaluative meanings of an atov unit. These meanings are formed in connection with the cultural experience of society, the conceptualizations in the minds of language users, and social values.



Furthermore, in the semantic structure of atov units, semantic differential markers play an important role. They indicate distinguishing features among units belonging to the same category, for example: oq, qizil, yashil. Although these markers share the same semantic field, each has a unique differentiating semantic component. Based on analyses, it can be stated that the semantic structure of atov units is multilayered, complex, and systematic, determining the lexical meaning of units, their stylistic possibilities, and their functional role in speech. This structure is formed in close connection with the lexical-semantic system of the language, its historical development, and cultural factors.

The semantic properties of atov units are manifested in several aspects:

Semantic extension: Within proper nouns or other atov units, the unit may go beyond its primary connection with the real object and be used in a generalized or symbolic sense. For example, the name of a historical figure may not merely denote the person but also indicate a particular quality, character, or behavioral model.

Formation of idiomatic meaning: In phraseological units, atov units show the phenomenon of “non-divisibility of meaning.” That is, the semantic content of the unit is formed not as the sum of individual words’ meanings but as a whole, figurative meaning.

Formation of connotative meanings: When proper nouns enter phraseologisms, they acquire historical, cultural, psychological, or socio-associative nuances. For example, toponyms generate additional meanings associated with the historical memory or mentality of a people.

Secondary nomination process: In phraseological contexts, proper nouns often become means of secondary naming. They do not denote the real object but serve as a linguistic sign expressing a certain quality, state, or situation. Therefore, such units go beyond ordinary nominative limits and enter a figurative and generalized naming system.

In modern linguistics, the structural-semantic approach is being developed as an important scientific concept. Considered an advanced stage enriched with contemporary analytical methods, this approach allows for a complex study of



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the harmony between form and meaning of language units. It also enables reconsideration of many issues within syntax.

In Russian linguistics, numerous studies are carried out on the semantic-structural features of atov units. One of these studies examines the grammatical nature of prepositive isolated nominatives and their place in the system of unsyntactic constructions, since nominatives, although formally resembling predicative sentences, are special syntactic units that are semantically independent.

Structurally, sign-expressing atov units are formed based on syntactic (compound structures), morphological (affixal derivational units), lexical (naming based on polysemous adjectives), and semantic (designation based on metaphorical or metonymic transfer) methods. For example, units such as oqsoqol, uzunquloq, qoraqo'zi stand out with their compositional structure. As a result of the combination of sign and object, a new nominative unit emerges. In such structures, the sign-forming component (adjective) and the named object component (noun) have a strong semantic connection with each other.

The structural organization of atov units occupies an important place. They perform a number of functions, such as expressing existence, enhancing imagery, clearly reflecting logical division, and ensuring the compositional structure of the text. Understanding the structural organization of atov units allows for broader scientific conclusions about the nature of the naming process in language.

From a genetic perspective, sign-based naming is one of the most archaic layers of ancient naming processes. Linguistics notes that in early societies, the most prominent sign of an object served as the basis for its identification. This process continues today and leads to the emergence of new sign-derivative units. Additionally, sign-based naming observed in Russian, English, and Turkish shows typological commonalities. In all languages, the sign-object model is the primary factor of nomination. The most important feature of sign-expressing naming is that the sign maintains a constant associative connection with the named object. The stability of this connection ensures the consolidation of the nominative unit and its integration into the lexical system. Therefore, such units perform not only a lexical naming function but also a cultural-semiotic information transmission function.

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The genetic characteristics of atov units involve studying the semantic-morphological layers formed under the influence of the origin, developmental stages, and historical-cultural factors of language units. When discussing the genetic characteristics of atov units, it is important to determine their source, the historical processes through which they entered the language system, and the semantic changes they underwent in subsequent development.

In the history of Uzbek linguistics, Mahmud al-Qashgari holds an exceptional place in scientifically substantiating the genesis, development, and sources of atov units. As one of the earliest Uzbek linguists, literary scholars, and ethnographers, he attempted to identify the historical-etymological research of Turkic languages and to substantiate their genetic significance. His work “Diwan Lughat al-Turk” serves as a primary scientific source for identifying the ancient layer of Turkic lexical items, stages of word formation, phonetic-morphological changes, and the genetic sources of atov units. Through comparative studies of Turkic languages, Mahmud al-Qashgari scientifically investigated their genesis, mutual lexical-morphological connections, and the historical development of atov units.

Mahmud al-Qashgari classified words into nouns, verbs, and auxiliary words, paying attention to the genealogical roots of nouns in Turkic languages. He referred to auxiliary words as “letters,” explaining their sources from a historical perspective. In his scientific heritage, issues such as language origin, bilingualism, influence of foreign languages, and historical formation of word classes are particularly important for identifying the genetic characteristics of atov units. The 11th-century scholar al-Zamakhshari, in his work “Muqaddimat al-Adab”, provided information about nouns, verbs, conjunctions, and noun classifications, revealing their morphological and semantic differentiation. This information allows for studying the historical foundations of the genetic development, grammatical formation, and classification paradigms of Turkic nouns.

In Uzbek linguistics, the work *At-Tuhfa*, translated from Arabic into Uzbek by E. Fozilov and M. Ziyoyeva, is also an important source for determining the genealogical characteristics of Turkic nouns. Although written in Arabic, the

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grammatical analyses in this work demonstrate how atov units were formed historically in Turkic and Arabic, and how their genetic roots developed.

In Uzbek, nouns constitute the oldest and most fundamental layer of the lexical-morphological system. They belong to the archaic layer of Turkic languages and serve to name concepts of human, object, and event. The genetic roots of nouns were formed in historical language layers – Old Turkic, Ancient Turkic, and Middle Turkic stages – and constitute the structural basis of contemporary Uzbek atov units.

Most atov units are derived from the internal resources of the national language. They trace back to the ancient Turkic roots of Uzbek, as well as to word-formation models and semantic processes developed in later periods. For example, units characteristic of the ancient Turkic period, such as *el*, *yurt*, *ota*, *ona*, *qalb*, although subject to various phonetic changes over centuries, have preserved their core semantic meaning. Their genetic characteristics are defined by continuous historical continuity, semantic stability, and common roots specific to Turkic languages.

At the same time, some atov units have entered from foreign languages – Arabic, Persian, Tajik, Russian – and have adapted to the phonetic-morphological system of Uzbek. Such units have a dual-layer genetic structure: on one hand, they possess unique meaning and structural characteristics, and on the other hand, they reveal a new functional-semantic essence shaped according to the internal regularities of the Uzbek language.

In conclusion, sign-expressing atov units are an important lexical-semantic phenomenon that expands the nominative possibilities of the language, models reality through precise signs, and is directly connected to the genetic layers of the language. If their semantic-structural model is motivated, their genetic nature clearly reflects historicity and cultural information transmission.

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