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CLASSIFICATION OF GRADONYMIC UNITS IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE AND THEIR COGNITIVE FEATURES

Ergasheva Guljahon Tutor,
University of Journalism and
Mass Communications of Uzbekistan

Abstract: This article examines the classification of gradonymic units in the Uzbek language and their cognitive features. It discusses the theoretical foundations of gradonymy, the criteria for its classification, and the semantic relationships between lexical units. Gradonymic units are also differentiated according to their lexical meaning and expressive colouring. The principal types of gradation—quantitative and dimensional, qualitative and attributive, action- and process-related, emotional, and evaluative gradation—are explained through specific examples.

Keywords: gradonymy, gradonymic units, lexical units, semantic relations, cognitive linguistics, denotative seme, connotative seme, synonymy, gradonymic series, dominant term.

Introduction

The analysis of the relationships among lexical units in a language system, the identification of their semantic nature, and the development of their systematic description are among the important tasks of contemporary linguistics. These tasks also require an examination of the relationship between language and thought, including how humans perceive reality and express it through linguistic means. Throughout the history of humankind, linguists representing different schools and approaches—from Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea that "language is the spirit of a nation" to Ferdinand de Saussure's structural approach to language and the studies of such prominent contemporary cognitive linguists as George Lakoff and Ronald Langacker—have paid particular attention to the systematic description of lexical units. Uzbek linguistics likewise has a rich scholarly tradition in this field, and research in this area has become increasingly profound and extensive over the past decades. The phenomenon of gradation (gradonymy) occupies a special place in addressing these tasks. At the lexical level, gradation is based on the principle whereby words form an ordered, hierarchical series according to a particular feature.

The classification of gradonymic units involves identifying their distinguishing and shared characteristics and determining the criteria according to which gradonymic series are formed. Before undertaking such a classification, it is useful to briefly clarify the essence of gradation. Uzbek linguists have approached this issue from different perspectives. In his doctoral dissertation entitled Gradation in the Uzbek Language, O. Bozorov provides a detailed account of the philosophical and logical foundations of this phenomenon. The scholar emphasises the need to represent, at the linguistic level, the law whereby quantitative changes in matter lead to qualitative changes, and characterises gradation as a specific regularity of language. On the basis of this definition, gradonymic series may be regarded as semantic paradigms through which language reflects objects and phenomena in the world according to the varying degree—greater or lesser—of a particular feature or property.

Any researcher intending to classify gradonymic units must first establish the basis, or criterion, of classification. Several approaches to this issue have developed in Uzbek linguistics.

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The first approach is based on the semantic criterion. Under this approach, words are classified according to the semantic relationships between them, particularly the archiseme that unites their meanings and the differential semes that distinguish them. In his dissertation The Relationship between Lexical Synonymy and Gradonymy in Uzbek, G. Rakhmonov examines this aspect in detail and develops a method for classifying the members of gradonymic series on the basis of their denotative and connotative semes. Denotative semes within a sememe are components of meaning that determine the word's primary referential content, whereas connotative semes express additional features, often stylistic or emotional. These two types of semes play different roles in the structure of a gradonymic series: some series are formed primarily through quantitative differences in denotative semes, while in others connotative semes predominate.

The second approach relies on the functional-semantic criterion. It classifies gradonymic series according to parts of speech. In Uzbek, gradation is particularly evident among adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. For example, aqlli – dono – donishmand – mutafakkir ('intelligent – wise – sage – thinker') illustrates an increasing degree of intellectual ability, while berahm – shafqatsiz – qahrli – zolim ('merciless – ruthless – wrathful – tyrannical') represents gradation in a negative character trait. Among verbs, zavqlanmoq – maroqlanmoq – shavqlanmoq ('to enjoy – to take pleasure – to delight') indicates increasing intensity of positive emotion, whereas urinmoq – harakat qilmoq – intilmoq – tirishmoq – unnamoq ('to make an effort – to act – to strive – to persevere – to exert oneself') reflects an increasing degree of volitional effort. Among adverbs, asta – sekin – ohista ('slowly – gradually – gently') expresses degrees of slowness in an action. Q. Eshboyev's research also considers gradation separately across parts of speech and identifies the specific features of gradation in each grammatical class.

The third approach is based on the direction-of-scaling criterion. This criterion concerns the direction in which gradation proceeds: either towards an increase or towards a decrease in intensity. This distinction is clearly reflected in the Educational Dictionary of Word Gradation in the Uzbek Language compiled by Sh. Bobojonov and I. Islomov. For example, the series sabo – shabada – yel – shamol – bo'ron – to'zon – quyun ('breeze – light wind – wind – strong wind – storm – gale – whirlwind') represents an increase in the force of air movement, whereas series such as qiyomat – zo'r – yaxshi – qoniqarli – omon illustrate a weakening of the relevant feature. For research purposes, both directions are important, as together they provide a more complete picture of a gradonymic series.

In Uzbek linguistics, including in the scholarly and practical work of Sh. Bobojonov and I. Islomov, gradation is divided into two main types: gradation according to meaning and gradation according to expressive colouring. This classification serves as an important methodological basis for classifying gradonymic series in Uzbek.

Gradation according to meaning comprises series whose words differ from one another in that they refer to different denotata, while being united around a common concept (archiseme) and distinguished by quantitative differences in a particular feature or property. For example, darcha – eshik – darvoza ('small door – door – gate') share the general concept of an 'entrance barrier to a room or courtyard', but their dimensions increase successively. Similarly, ariq – soy – kanal – daryo – dengiz – okean ('irrigation ditch – stream – canal – river – sea – ocean') share the general concept of a 'body or flow of water', while increasing in size and width. In – uya – uy – hovli – qasr – saroy – koshona ('den – nest – house – courtyard/estate – mansion – palace – luxurious residence') share the general concept of a 'place adapted and

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enclosed for a human being or other living creature to inhabit', while increasing in size and grandeur.

In gradation according to meaning, each member of a series (gradonym) has a separate, independent referent—an individual object in reality. This is a principal criterion distinguishing gradonymy from synonymy. G. Rakhmonov draws particular attention to this issue, noting that all members of a synonymic series express the same denotatum in different ways, whereas each member of a gradonymic series has its own denotatum and differs from the others in the degree of a particular feature.

Gradation according to expressive colouring, by contrast, is a type of gradation closely associated with synonymic relations. In such series, the words refer to the same denotatum and, like synonyms, have identical or closely related meanings; however, they differ in the strength, impact, and intensity with which they express a particular feature. This differentiation arises mainly through connotative semes, including stylistic colouring, emotional tone, and degree of expressiveness. For example, kuchli – baquvvat – zabardast ('strong – powerful – mighty') share the archiseme 'physical strength', while the feature becomes progressively more intense. In yaxshi – zo'r – ajoyib – qiyomat ('good – great – excellent – exceptionally good'), the semantic component of 'positive evaluation' increases. In tezkor – chaqqon – ziyrak – epchil ('quick – agile – alert – nimble'), speed of action and agility are graded.

In gradation according to expressive colouring, synonymic relations are particularly evident between adjacent words in a series. This marks the area in which synonymy and gradonymy intersect. Nevertheless, their essential nature differs: synonymy enables members of a series to express the same denotatum in different stylistic ways, whereas in gradonymy the degree of the feature itself changes. G. Rakhmonov substantiates this theoretical distinction through Uzbek-language material and demonstrates the presence of a gradonymic relationship in the series yuz – bet – aft – bashara – turq ('face' expressed through increasingly negative or emotionally marked terms), based on the increasing intensity of the emotional feature.

Three principal elements can be identified when analysing the structure of a gradonymic series: the dominant term, the periphery, and the boundaries of the series.

The dominant term is the neutral, stylistically unmarked member of a gradonymic series. The concept of a dominant also exists in synonymic series, where it serves as the basis for explaining all the members. In a gradonymic series, however, the dominant represents the 'zero' degree of a feature or property. For example, in ovora – sarsari – sargardon ('preoccupied/troubled – wandering – utterly displaced'), ovora occupies the neutral (zero) position; sarsari expresses a certain degree of negative intensification, while sargardon conveys an even stronger degree.

The periphery consists of the marginal members of a series, which are furthest from the dominant term and express the highest or lowest degree of a feature. For example, in qorong'ilik – zulmat – zimiston – zim-ziyo ('darkness – deep darkness – pitch darkness – utter darkness'), qorong'ilik represents the lowest degree, while zim-ziyo expresses the highest.

The boundaries of a gradonymic series remain a subject of considerable debate in linguistics. From a logical perspective, a gradonymic series may continue indefinitely, since reality itself is infinite and characterised by continuous gradation. The expressive resources of language, however, are limited: language cannot fully represent the countless gradations found in the world. O. Bozorov writes in this regard: "Gradation in language is a manifestation of the gradation of the entire universe reflected in language ... However, because human sensory capacities are extremely limited, it is difficult to perceive things exactly as they are and to

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express them through language." This observation indicates that gradonymic series in the linguistic system are relatively complete: language can represent differences up to a certain level, but not every subtle distinction can be expressed by a separate lexeme.

From a semantic perspective, the following principal types of gradonymic series can be identified in Uzbek:

1. Gradation by size and quantity. In these series, a feature is graded in terms of quantity, volume, measurement, or size. For example, tomchi – jilg'a – ariq – soy – daryo – dengiz – okean ('drop – rivulet – irrigation ditch – stream – river – sea – ocean') represents an increase in the volume of water; ninni – chaqaloq – go'dak – bola – o'smir – yigit – erkak – chol ('infant – newborn – baby – child – adolescent – young man – adult man – elderly man') represents increasing age; and in – uya – uy – hovli – qasr – saroy – koshona ('den – nest – house – courtyard/estate – mansion – palace – luxurious residence') represents the increasing scale of a human dwelling. In such series, denotative semes predominate, and each member has an independent referent. This type constitutes the principal manifestation of gradation according to meaning.

2. Gradation of qualities and properties. In these series, the intensity of a particular feature is graded: the feature either increases or decreases. Examples include kuchli – baquvvat – zabardast ('strong – powerful – mighty'), which represents degrees of physical strength; iliq – issiq – qaynoq ('warm – hot – boiling hot'), which represents degrees of temperature; and qizg'ish – qizil – ol – qirmizi ('reddish – red – scarlet – crimson'), which represents degrees or shades of redness. This type is a principal manifestation of gradation according to expressive colouring, with connotative semes playing a leading role.

3. Gradation of actions and processes. Gradation is also clearly manifested in the semantics of verbs. Series are formed according to the speed, force, or manner of performing an action. For instance, shivirlamoq – pichirlamoq – aytmoq – gapirmoq – baqirmoq – hayqirmoq ('to whisper softly – to whisper – to say – to speak – to shout – to yell') represents increasing voice volume; sezmoq – his etmoq – idrok etmoq – anglamoq – tushunmoq ('to sense – to feel – to perceive – to realise – to understand') represents degrees of cognition; and imillamoq – sudralmoq – yurmoq – chopmoq – yelmoq ('to move very slowly – to crawl/drag oneself – to walk – to run – to sprint') represents increasing speed of movement.

In her dissertation Verb Gradonymy in Uzbek and English, M. Otaboyeva examines this issue comparatively using material from English and identifies the specific features of gradation in verbs.

4. Emotional gradation. In these series, a person's emotional state, mood, and feelings are graded. Such series are determined by connotative semes and are generally distinguished by a high degree of expressiveness. Examples include g'am – tashvish – qayg'u – kulfat – musibat ('sorrow – worry – grief – distress – calamity'), representing degrees of emotional suffering; qo'rquv – vahima – dahshat ('fear – panic – terror'), representing increasing intensity of fear; and xurramlik – sevinch – quvonch – shodlik – surur – farah ('happiness – gladness – joy – delight – elation – rapture'), representing increasing intensity of positive emotions.

In her examination of this type of series, G. Rakhmonov demonstrates the dominant role of connotative semes in the gradation of emotional features and emphasises the need to take into account the stylistic markedness of each member. In the scholar's view, the differences between words in emotional gradation series are manifested not only in the intensity of a feature but also in their stylistic colouring: one member may be characteristic of colloquial

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speech, another of literary or bookish style, and a third of belles-lettres. This is a distinctive feature that differentiates emotional gradation series from other types.

5. Evaluative gradation. This type expresses the speaker's attitude in graded form—as positive, neutral, or negative. Examples include kamchilik – ayb – nuqson – qusur – illat ('shortcoming – fault – defect – flaw – vice'), representing increasing degrees of negative evaluation; tuzuk – durust – yaxshi – ajoyib – a'lo ('adequate – satisfactory – good – excellent – outstanding'), representing increasing positive evaluation; and iz – nishon – asar – asorat ('trace – mark – sign/effect – lasting consequence'), representing degrees of a mark left by something. This type is also formed mainly on the basis of connotative semes and expresses the speaker's subjective attitude.

The five types of gradonymic series discussed above—quantitative and dimensional, qualitative and attributive, action- and process-related, emotional, and evaluative gradation—clearly demonstrate the complexity and multidimensional nature of the Uzbek lexical system. Although these types differ semantically, they all share a common principle: each member of a series reflects a particular level of reality, while language expresses the way in which humans perceive the world. Thus, gradation is significant not only for lexicology but also from a cognitive perspective. Consequently, studying gradation solely at the linguistic level is insufficient; it is a scholarly necessity to investigate it in close connection with human cognitive activity. This problem constitutes one of the priority areas of contemporary cognitive linguistics.

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