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PHYTONYMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract. This article examines phytonyms (plant names) in English and Uzbek, analyzing their linguistic, cultural, and etymological aspects. It explores the similarities and differences in the formation, classification, and semantic features of plant names in both languages. The study highlights the influence of historical, geographical, and environmental factors on phytonymic systems. Additionally, the article discusses challenges in translation and the cultural significance of phytonyms in folklore and daily life. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of linguistic diversity and the interaction between language and nature.
Key Words: Phytonyms, plant names, English, Uzbek, linguistics, etymology, classification, cultural significance, translation, language and nature.

Introduction

Language serves as a reflection of the natural and cultural environment in which a society develops, and one of the most vivid examples of this relationship is found in phytonyms—the names of plants. Phytonyms are an essential part of linguistic and cultural heritage, carrying historical, geographical, and even mythological significance. They not only help us classify and identify plant species but also offer insights into the way different communities interact with nature.

By examining the role of phytonyms in both English and Uzbek, this research will contribute to a broader understanding of how language and culture shape our perception of the natural world.

1. The Role of Phytonyms in Language and Culture

Phytonyms, or plant names, are an essential part of any language, reflecting the close relationship between humans and the natural world. Since ancient times, plants have played a significant role in people's lives, providing food, medicine, clothing, shelter, and even spiritual or symbolic meaning. As a result, plant names are not only scientific identifiers but also carriers of cultural, historical, and linguistic information.

Phytonyms also reflect the way people interact with their environment. In agricultural societies, plant names are often linked to their use or seasonal characteristics. For example, in Uzbek, "bargizub" (literally "wound-healing leaf") refers to plantain (Plantago major), highlighting its medicinal properties. Similarly, in English, "weeping willow" describes both the tree's drooping branches and its association with sorrow and mourning.

Phytonyms in Everyday Language and Idioms

Plant names frequently appear in idiomatic expressions and proverbs, further illustrating their cultural significance. In English, phrases like "the grass is always greener on the other side" (meaning people always desire what they don't have) and "to come up roses"

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(meaning to turn out well) reflect the symbolic use of plants. Similarly, Uzbek proverbs such as "Chinorni chinor soyasida o‘stir" (Grow a plane tree in the shade of another plane tree, meaning the strong will raise the strong) highlight the role of plants as metaphors for human experiences.

Moreover, phytonyms can be used to describe human traits and emotions. In English, calling someone a "wallflower" implies they are shy and withdrawn, while in Uzbek, the term "lola yuzli" (tulip-faced) is used to describe a beautiful person.

2. Word Formation Patterns in English and Uzbek Phytonyms

The names of plants in English and Uzbek are formed through different morphological and lexical processes, including:

a) Simplex Phytonyms (Root Words)

Some phytonyms are based on simple root words, often inherited from ancient linguistic sources.

- English: oak, pine, rose, wheat
- Uzbek: terak (poplar), eman (oak), atirgul (rose), bug‘doy (wheat)

These words are often among the oldest in the language and reflect plants commonly known to native speakers.

b) Compound Phytonyms

Many phytonyms are compounds, where two or more words are combined to describe a plant’s characteristics, habitat, or use.

- English: sunflower (sun + flower), blackcurrant (black + currant), snowdrop (snow + drop)
- Uzbek: malla lola (malla ‘golden’ + lola ‘tulip’), qora uzum (qora ‘black’ + uzum ‘grape’), qizilmiya (qizil ‘red’ + miya ‘licorice root’)

These compounds often provide additional descriptive meaning, highlighting the plant’s color, shape, or function.

Suffixes such as -ish, -y in English and -zor, -lik in Uzbek contribute to expanding the meaning of phytonyms.

Classification of Phytonyms in English and Uzbek

Phytonyms, or plant names, can be classified based on various criteria, including their botanical characteristics, semantic meanings, and cultural significance. Below is a classification of phytonyms in English and Uzbek:

Semantic Classification

Phytonyms can also be categorized based on their semantic meanings, including metaphorical names, mythological references, and regional names.

- Metaphorical Names

Some plant names are derived from their appearance, function, or other symbolic associations.

- English: "weeping willow" (a willow tree with drooping branches resembling tears)
- Uzbek: "qoragul" (a flower named for its blackish color, meaning "black flower")
- Mythological and Folklore-Based Phytonyms

Many plant names are rooted in myths and legends.

- English: "Venus flytrap" (named after the Roman goddess Venus)
- Uzbek: "Anor" (pomegranate, often mentioned in Uzbek folklore and poetry as a symbol of beauty and prosperity)

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- Regional and Dialectal Names

Some plant names vary depending on the region or dialect.

- English: "corn" (in the U.S., it refers to maize, while in the U.K., it historically referred to wheat)

- Uzbek: "chillaki" (a regional name for a type of small wild fruit)

4. Similarities and Differences Between English and Uzbek Phytonyms

Phytonyms in both English and Uzbek reflect the natural environment, culture, and history of their respective language communities. While some plant names are universal due to global botanical classification, others vary based on geography, cultural associations, and linguistic influences.

4 Similarities Between English and Uzbek Phytonyms

1. Common Plant Names with Similar Meanings

Some plant names in English and Uzbek correspond closely in meaning because they refer to globally recognized species. For example:

- Apple – Olma (widely known and cultivated in both cultures)

- Rose – Atirgul (a commonly used flower in poetry and literature)

- Walnut – Yong‘oq (a tree with agricultural significance in both regions)

3. Metaphorical and Symbolic Meaning

Many plant names carry metaphorical meanings in both cultures, often used in literature, proverbs, and idioms:

- Rose symbolizes love and beauty in both English and Uzbek traditions.

- Oak (Dub) represents strength and endurance in both languages.

- Willow (Tol) is associated with sorrow and sadness in poetry from both cultures.

4 Differences Between English and Uzbek Phytonyms

1. Geographical and Climatic Differences

Due to climate and geography, some plant species are common in one region but rare or nonexistent in the other. This influences the number and variety of phytonyms. For example:

- Bluebell (common in England) has no direct equivalent in Uzbek as it is not a native species.

- Pistachio tree (Pista) is well known in Uzbekistan but not native to England.

2. Cultural and Historical Influence on Naming

- English phytonyms are influenced by Latin and Greek due to scientific classification (e.g., Dandelion from French dent-de-lion, meaning "lion’s tooth").

- Uzbek phytonyms often contain Persian and Arabic influences due to historical ties (e.g., Rayhon for basil, borrowed from Persian).

Origins of English Phytonyms

The majority of English plant names are derived from Latin and Greek, reflecting the influence of classical botanical classification. Many plant names were introduced through scientific taxonomy, established by Carl Linnaeus in the 18th century. For instance:

- Rosa (rose) originates from Latin rosa, which itself may trace back to Greek rhodon.

- Dandelion comes from Old French dent de lion ("lion’s tooth"), describing the plant’s serrated leaves.

- Thyme has Greek origins (thymos), meaning "courage" or "fragrance."

Additionally, some plant names come from Old English and Germanic roots, often based on physical characteristics or uses in traditional medicine. Examples include:

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- Oak (from Old English āc)
- Holly (from Old English holen)
- Birch (from Proto-Germanic berkô)

Origins of Uzbek Phytonyms

Uzbek phytonyms have been influenced by Persian, Arabic, and Turkic linguistic traditions. Many plant names reflect cultural and historical exchanges along the Silk Road. For example:

- Gul (flower) comes from Persian گل (gol), found in names like atirgul (rose) and lola (tulip).
- Ziravor (spice) and zirk (barberry) originate from Persian, indicating historical culinary influence.

Conclusion

In this article, we explored the similarities and differences between English and Uzbek phytonyms, highlighting their linguistic, cultural, and etymological aspects. The study of plant names reveals deep connections between language, history, and the environment, showing how different cultures categorize and perceive nature.

While both languages share common botanical classifications, significant differences arise due to geographic, climatic, and historical factors. English phytonyms often have Latin and Greek roots, reflecting the influence of scientific nomenclature, whereas Uzbek phytonyms are shaped by Persian, Arabic, and Turkic linguistic influences. Additionally, some plant names carry symbolic meanings in one culture but not in the other, making translation and interpretation challenging.

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Conclusion

Understanding phytonyms enhances our appreciation of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Future research could further explore regional variations, metaphorical uses, and the impact of globalization on plant nomenclature. By studying phytonyms, we not only deepen our knowledge of languages but also gain insight into the relationship between humans and nature.

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