COMPARATIVE AND TYPOLOGICAL STUDY OF SEMANTIC CATEGORIES INHERENT IN A NOUN (USING THE EXAMPLE OF UZBEK AND ENGLISH)

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Abstract. *This article provides a comparative-typological analysis of the semantic categories inherent in nouns in Uzbek and English. As a result of the analysis, taking into account typological data, both similarities and differences between languages are revealed. From this perspective, the comparison explains which categories express the semantics of a noun and how they manifest in the languages being studied. This approach not only reveals the differences between the two languages but also contributes to establishing common principles of semantic systems. The research results can be useful in the field of linguistic theory, applied linguistics, and translation.*

The concept of semantic category, that is, the types of meanings expressed in language, is considered on the example of lexical units, in particular, nouns. The study examines the following semantic categories.

Keywords: *noun, semantic category, comparative-typological analysis, lexical-semantic groups, Uzbek language, English language, animate and inanimate nouns, proper and genitive nouns, concrete and abstract nouns, semantic analysis.*

Introduction

The noun is a fundamental part of speech that constitutes a significant portion of the vocabulary in both Uzbek and English. It functions as the designation of a person, object, place, state, or phenomenon and also serves as the core element in nominal word combinations. Nouns are distinguished based on semantic, morphological, and syntactic features.

Studying the theoretical foundations of the noun category in Uzbek and English and examining their lexico-semantic characteristics allows us to clarify their division into certain lexico-grammatical groups. In both languages, the general meanings and semantic groups of nouns are similar: they are divided into concrete and abstract, proper and common, animate and inanimate, singular and collective nouns.

In any natural language, the noun represents a primary lexical unit. In Uzbek and English, nouns usually function as the subject or object in a sentence and occupy a central place in both the grammatical and semantic structure. When studying nouns, their semantic categories are of great importance in addition to grammatical features.

Semantic categories are types of meanings expressed by linguistic means. In linguistics, this concept is particularly thoroughly studied in logical semantics and philosophy. The theory of semantic categories was developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by G. Frege and E. Husserl, who called it Bedeutungskategorien ("categories of meaning"). Later, this direction was deepened by representatives of the Lviv–Warsaw School of Philosophy. Scholars such as S. Lesniewski, A. Tarski, K. Ajdukiewicz, T. Kotarbinski, and others applied this theory to logical and linguistic systems.

The Category of Animacy/Inanimacy of the Noun

It is known that the category of animacy/inanimacy is connected with the innate human ability to divide the surrounding world into living and non-living beings and objects. This classification is universal and reflects the essential aspects of human thinking. The linguistic worldview expressed in any language reflects not only the spiritual and physical experiences of a person but also their attitude toward the world (nature, animals, themselves as part of the world). From this perspective, in the compared languages, the animacy category is built on binary opposition and expressed by lexico-grammatical means.

In Uzbek, the classification of nouns by animacy is based on the interrogative words kim? (who?) and nima? (what?). Nouns answering kim? are names of people (e.g., ayol — woman, shifokor — doctor, o'qituvchi — teacher), whereas those answering nima? denote objects (e.g., dars — lesson, kitob — book, mushuk — cat, daraxt — tree). In particular, in Eastern traditions, including Uzbek culture, being is divided into kishilik (personal) and nokishilik (non-personal), where the latter may include both animate and inanimate objects [Rahmatullayev 2006:204].

In Uzbek, the division of nouns into animate and inanimate does not have a clear grammatical basis. The question kim? applies only to humans, while all other nouns take nima?. Therefore, a lexico-semantic approach is taken to analyze this category.

Thus, in Uzbek, the division into kishilik and nokishilik (personal and non-personal) differs from the English opposition animate/inanimate. In English, the agreement of nouns with pronouns he/she/it is related to the category of gender. Animate nouns denote living beings (e.g., man, woman, dog, cat), while inanimate ones denote non-living objects or phenomena: book, wind, freedom, and use the pronoun it. If the gender of an animal is unknown, it is also used.

In English, the animacy category is expressed through a range of morphological means: suffixes such as -er, -or, -ar, -ee, -ite, -ess, -ian, -ent and words like -man, -boy, -woman, -girl. However, animacy can also be expressed without morphological markers: child, son, friend, etc. In Uzbek, a similar function is realized through derivation using affixes and composition.

In modern Uzbek literary language, the following affixes are commonly used to form personal nouns: -chi, -kor, -soz, -furush, -shunos, -paz, -xo'r, -boz, -xon, -navis, -

parast, -go'y, -dosh — each differing in meaning, usage, and other features [Hojiev, 2007:63].

However, the productive formation of animate nouns can be unstable when a shift toward inanimacy occurs. For instance, in English, -er/-or typically form nouns for people engaged in certain activities (e.g., teacher, actor) but are also used for inanimate objects with specific functions (toaster, computer). The suffix -ist may denote profession or group identity (artist), but is also found in object names (motorist, alarmist). Similarly, -ian typically forms personal names (librarian), but may denote objects (guardian — security device). Such usage suggests a functional analogy with human roles.

In Uzbek, there is also a transition of meaning from proper nouns to common nouns. For example, Xosiyatxon is a woman's name, but also a type of fabric. Or Rizamat — a grape variety named after a hardworking gardener. Thus, derivative nouns can gain new lexical meanings. The borrowed Tajik suffix -xo'r is used to form nouns for beings consuming something: hasharotxo'r (insectivore), o'laksaxo'r (scavenger). In such words, -xo'r means "feeding on something," and the exact meaning is determined by the root. However, such derivatives are limited in number [Hojiev, 2007:75].

The Category of Abstractness/Concreteness

It is known that within nouns, two interconnected categorial concepts exist — "substance" and "objecthood." The concept of "objecthood" is interpreted in various ways: it is analyzed as a grammatical, lexico-grammatical, or lexico-semantic category. For example, M.I. Steblin-Kamensky emphasized that the meaning of a noun is a grammatical meaning of objecthood, while the lexical meaning comes along with it. In his view, nouns grammatically always express "objecthood" and lexically are divided into "object-based" (e.g., table, chair) and "non-object-based" (e.g., beauty, walk) [Steblin-Kamensky, 1974:45].

A semantic approach to nouns is found in the works of scholars such as H. Sweet, H. Palmer, O. Jespersen, J. Kern, and J. Newson, and their classifications differ. O. Jespersen, for instance, divides nouns into six subcategories: living beings and plants, inanimate objects, things, events and states, units of measurement, and indicators of quantity and features. J. Kern distinguishes five subcategories: common, proper, material, collective, and abstract nouns. J. Newson identifies four groups: common and proper, concrete and abstract. The most accepted classification is H. Sweet's, where nouns are first divided into variable and invariable, then into concrete and abstract. Concrete nouns are further subdivided into proper, collective, and material.

As seen, classifying nouns remains a complex task and subject of much research. However, most classifications divide nouns into concrete and abstract. This categorization relies on the semantic, morphological, and syntactic features of nouns or their correspondence.

The category of concreteness includes nouns denoting material, visible, and perceptible objects. These are directly sensed and can be easily imagined. Such nouns represent real, physical world entities and are perceived through sight, hearing, touch, or smell.

Main features of concrete nouns:

Materiality: They denote physically existing objects (e.g., uy – house, daraxt – tree, stol – table).

Sensory perception: They can be experienced through the senses and easily visualized.

Specificity: They refer to specific objects (e.g., table immediately conjures a concrete image).

Context independence: They can be used without much contextual dependency.

Imagery: They are easily pictured in the mind.

Abstract nouns denote ideas that lack concrete form and cannot be directly sensed. For example: sevgi (love), baxt (happiness), adolat (justice). These are not substances but mental or conceptual notions.

Main features of abstract nouns:

Immateriality: They lack physical form and are understood only intellectually.

Universality: They are common across cultures (e.g., freedom, truth).

Grammatical expression: Many are formed from adjectives or verbs (e.g., go'zallik from an adjective, bilim from a verb).

Context sensitivity: Some words can be both concrete and abstract depending on context (e.g., tajriba – experiment vs. life experience).

Thus, the difference lies not only in whether they denote real or imagined objects but also in how they express qualities or attributes [Sayfullayeva, 2009:323].

The Category of Countability/Uncountability

The category of countability relates to the grammatical category of number. Countable nouns can take plural forms, while a lack of plural form signals uncountability. Whether a singular noun is uncountable depends on its semantics and grammar.

Sh. Rahmatullayev explains this as the manifestation of the singular form in the counting paradigm. For example, daraxt (tree) may logically refer to multiple trees as a category, while daraxtlar limits the reference to a specific group. Morphologically, Uzbek lacks a specific singular marker — bola (child) can refer to one or more depending on context. It gains singular meaning only through contrast with bolalar (children) [Rahmatullayev, 2006:133].

Countability in Uzbek is thus determined by morphological, contextual, and pragmatic factors.

In contrast, English uses grammatical markers like a/an to indicate countability. This category has lexical, grammatical, and syntactic dimensions. Hence, whether a noun is countable depends on dominant features across these levels.

Two special noun types must be noted:

Pluralia tantum (only plural): e.g., trousers, scissors, tongs, pincers, breeches, environs, outskirts, dregs.

Singularia tantum (only singular): e.g., information, advice, furniture.

The Category of Collectiveness

Collective nouns share features with uncountable nouns, representing indivisible sets of countable objects, e.g., nation, team.

In Uzbek, nouns like xalq (people), qoʻshin (army) denote more than one entity but formally appear in singular form. Number forms in Uzbek include:

1. Singular,

2. Dual,

3. Plural,

4. General quantity.

In English, collectiveness is expressed by:

Collective nouns: team, family, committee, audience. These may agree with singular or plural verbs: The team is winning vs. The team are arguing.

Nouns of multitude: people, cattle, police, clergy — always plural: The police are investigating.

Conclusion

Thus, the semantic categories of nouns in Uzbek and English form a multi-layered and flexible system that reflects how speakers of each language perceive, classify, and conceptualize reality. Categories such as concreteness/abstractness, countability/uncountability, collectiveness, animacy/inanimacy, individuality/ plurality define the lexico-grammatical properties of nouns and play an important role in syntax and meaning-making.

The comparative analysis of these categories reveals both universal features common across languages and specific traits tied to national-cultural and cognitive frameworks. Understanding how these categories function provides insight into language structure and interlingual equivalence, laying a foundation for further comparative-typological and applied linguistic studies.

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