



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIALECTAL LEXEMES IN THE QASHQADARYO REGION AND THE UZBEK LITERARY LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This article examines dialectal lexemes preserved in the dialects of the Qashqadaryo region and their reflection in the modern literary Uzbek language. Dialects are viewed as important sources of historical vocabulary that has become obsolete or stylistically limited in the standard language. The study employs descriptive, comparative, and historical-linguistic methods based on data from spoken dialectal speech, regional folklore texts, and Uzbek dialectological dictionaries. The findings show that Qashqadaryo dialects preserve numerous archaic lexemes, particularly in semantic fields related to traditional lifestyle and agriculture. Some lexemes retain their original meanings, while others undergo semantic change or lack literary equivalents. The research highlights the importance of dialectal studies for understanding the diachronic development of Uzbek vocabulary and preserving linguistic heritage.

Keywords: Qashqadaryo dialects, archaic lexical units, Uzbek language, dialectology, semantic change, literary language.

Introduction

The Uzbek language, as a historically layered and regionally diverse linguistic system, has developed through continuous interaction between its literary norm and local dialects. Dialects serve not only as communicative varieties but also as repositories of archaic lexical units that preserve earlier stages of linguistic development. According to Rahmatullaev , dialectal vocabulary often retains



lexical items that have disappeared from the standard language or have undergone significant semantic change.

Among Uzbek dialects, the dialects of the Qashqadaryo region occupy a particularly important position due to their conservative lexical structure and close connection with traditional lifestyles. Scholars note that many archaic words related to agriculture, kinship, craftsmanship, and household activities have been preserved in these dialects. These lexical units provide valuable material for studying the diachronic development of Uzbek vocabulary.

In modern Uzbek linguistics, increasing attention is paid to dialectology and historical lexicology, especially in the context of preserving linguistic heritage. Archaic lexical units preserved in dialects reflect cultural continuity and serve as evidence of historical linguistic processes such as semantic shift, lexical replacement, and standardization.

The relevance of this study lies in the need to document and analyze archaic vocabulary still actively used in regional speech but marginalized or obsolete in literary Uzbek. Understanding the relationship between dialectal archaisms and the literary language contributes to broader discussions on language evolution, norm formation, and cultural identity.

The aim of this article is to identify archaic lexical units preserved in Qashqadaryo dialects and to analyze their reflection, transformation, or disappearance in the literary Uzbek language.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative linguistic research design grounded in descriptive, comparative, and historical-linguistic approaches, which are widely employed in dialectological and historical lexicological studies. A qualitative methodology was selected because the research focuses on the semantic, functional, and diachronic characteristics of archaic lexical units rather than on their quantitative frequency. As emphasized by Hojiyev, the investigation of dialectal vocabulary requires an in-depth qualitative analysis that takes into account linguistic context, speaker usage, and historical background¹.

¹ Hojiyev A. O‘zbek tili dialektologiyasi. – Toshkent : O‘qituvchi, 2002. – 198 b.



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The primary linguistic data were collected from multiple complementary sources to ensure reliability and representativeness. First, samples of spoken speech were gathered from native speakers residing in various districts of the Qashqadaryo region. Informants were selected from different age groups, with particular attention paid to elderly speakers, as they tend to preserve archaic vocabulary more consistently². The data collection involved informal conversations and narrative speech, which allowed for the natural occurrence of dialectal lexemes. Second, regional folklore texts, including folk tales, proverbs, sayings, and oral narratives, were analyzed. Folklore texts are known to preserve archaic linguistic forms and culturally significant vocabulary over long periods of time³. These materials provided valuable evidence for identifying archaic lexical units that have remained stable in collective memory but are rarely used in contemporary literary discourse.

Third, dialectological and explanatory dictionaries of the Uzbek language were consulted. These included both classical and modern lexicographic sources, which enabled cross-verification of dialectal forms and their literary counterparts. Lexicographic comparison was essential for determining whether a lexical unit is classified as archaic, obsolete, or stylistically marked in literary Uzbek.

The descriptive method was employed to identify, classify, and systematize archaic lexical units according to their semantic fields, such as household activities, agriculture, kinship relations, and traditional crafts. Each lexical unit was analyzed in terms of its form, meaning, and usage in dialectal speech. This method allowed for a detailed linguistic description of archaic vocabulary as it functions within the Qashqadaryo dialectal system.

The comparative method played a central role in the study, as it enabled a systematic comparison between archaic dialectal lexemes and their equivalents or replacements in the literary Uzbek language. Through this method, similarities and differences in semantic structure, stylistic value, and functional usage were identified. As noted by Danilenko, comparative analysis is essential for revealing

² Rahmatullaev Sh. Hozirgi o'zbek adabiy tili. – Toshkent : Universitet, 2006. – 256 b.

³ Safarov Sh. Lingvistik diskurs. – Samarqand, 2018. – 148 b.



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systemic differences between language varieties and for understanding processes of lexical replacement and standardization⁴.

The historical-linguistic method was applied to trace the origin, etymology, and diachronic development of selected lexical units. This involved analyzing the historical layers of vocabulary and identifying connections with earlier Turkic forms. The analysis relied on established etymological studies, particularly those by Clauson⁵ and Sevortyan⁶, which provided a reliable framework for reconstructing the historical semantics of archaic words. In addition, contextual analysis was used to examine the functional and stylistic characteristics of archaic lexical units within dialectal discourse. By analyzing lexical items in their natural communicative contexts, the study determined whether these units function as neutral, expressive, or stylistically marked elements. Contextual analysis also made it possible to identify pragmatic factors influencing the continued use of archaic vocabulary in regional speech.

To enhance the validity of the findings, data from different sources were cross-checked and triangulated. However, the study is limited by its qualitative nature and regional focus, as it does not aim to provide a comprehensive quantitative account of all archaic lexical units in Qashqadaryo dialects. Despite these limitations, the chosen methodology offers a reliable framework for analyzing the preservation and transformation of archaic vocabulary within the dialect–literary language continuum.

Results

The analysis demonstrates that the dialects of the Qashqadaryo region preserve a substantial layer of archaic lexical units originating from earlier stages of Uzbek and, more broadly, Turkic language development. These lexemes represent vocabulary that was once widespread in the literary language but has gradually fallen out of active use due to processes of standardization, modernization, and lexical replacement. In contemporary literary Uzbek, many of these words are

⁴ Danilenko V. P. *Russkaya terminologiya*. – Moskva : Nauka, 1997. – 246 s.

⁵ Clauson G. *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*. – Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1972. – 989 p.

⁶ Sevortyan E. V. *Etimologicheskiy slovar' tyurkskikh yazykov*. – Moskva : Nauka, 1974. – 767 s.



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either classified as obsolete, restricted to poetic or historical styles, or encountered primarily in folklore and archival texts.

A particularly high concentration of archaic lexical units was identified in semantic fields closely connected with traditional rural life. Words related to agriculture, irrigation practices, animal husbandry, household tools, and kinship relations have remained remarkably stable in dialectal usage. This stability reflects the socio-economic structure of the region, where traditional forms of livelihood have persisted longer than in urbanized areas. As Hojiyev (2002) observes, rural dialects are less susceptible to rapid lexical change, as they are less influenced by institutional language planning and standardized education.

Furthermore, the data indicate that these archaic lexemes are not merely passive remnants but continue to function actively in everyday communication among local speakers. Their frequent use in spontaneous speech suggests that they remain cognitively salient and culturally meaningful within the regional speech community.

The results reveal two major tendencies in the semantic behavior of archaic lexical units preserved in Qashqadaryo dialects: semantic stability and semantic change. A number of archaic words have retained their original meanings with minimal or no semantic shift. These lexemes demonstrate a high degree of semantic stability, which can be attributed to the continuity of the cultural practices they denote. In such cases, the absence of conceptual change in the referent contributes to the preservation of both form and meaning.

At the same time, a significant portion of archaic lexical units has undergone semantic narrowing, specialization, or partial reinterpretation. Some words that once had broad semantic scopes in earlier stages of the language are now used in more limited or context-specific meanings. According to Rahmatullaev, semantic change serves as a key indicator of lexical evolution and reflects shifts in cultural priorities and communicative needs.

The analysis also shows that in several instances, literary Uzbek has replaced archaic lexemes with loanwords primarily from Russian or international vocabulary or with newly standardized forms. However, Qashqadaryo dialects continue to employ indigenous lexical items, thereby maintaining older layers of



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vocabulary. This divergence illustrates an ongoing tension between modernization-driven lexical innovation and dialectal conservatism.

Another important finding is that certain archaic dialectal lexemes lack direct equivalents in the modern literary Uzbek language. These words often encode culturally specific concepts, traditional practices, or locally significant objects that are not fully represented in standardized vocabulary. In such cases, literary Uzbek either uses descriptive constructions or omits these concepts altogether.

These lexemes are of particular linguistic value, as they reveal aspects of regional worldview and cultural experience that are not captured by the literary norm. As Dadaboyev emphasizes, dialect-specific vocabulary plays a crucial role in shaping regional linguistic identity and preserving cultural distinctiveness⁷. The absence of direct literary equivalents further highlights the limitations of the standard language in representing the full lexical diversity of Uzbek.

Discussion

The preservation of archaic lexical units in Qashqadaryo dialects underscores the fundamental role of dialects as custodians of linguistic and cultural heritage. These lexical items function as living witnesses to earlier historical stages of the Uzbek language and provide insight into the diachronic continuity of linguistic forms. As Safarov notes, dialectal vocabulary often preserves cultural meanings that are lost or weakened in standardized language varieties.

Dialectal archaisms also demonstrate that language change is not uniform across regions. While the literary language undergoes rapid transformation due to sociopolitical reforms, educational policies, and globalization, dialects tend to maintain conservative features. This uneven development aligns with sociolinguistic observations made by Labov, who argues that regional and social factors significantly influence the pace and direction of linguistic change⁸.

The process of language standardization, particularly during the 20th century, has played a decisive role in marginalizing archaic lexical units. In Uzbek, the establishment of a unified literary norm led to the selection and codification of

⁷ Dadaboyev H. O‘zbek dialektologiyasi. – Toshkent : Fan, 2015. – 312 b.

⁸ Labov W. Principles of Linguistic Change. – Oxford : Blackwell, 2001. – 638 p.



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specific lexical forms, while others were excluded from official usage. As Hojiyev points out, this process inevitably results in lexical loss, especially for regionally marked or archaic words.

The findings suggest that many archaic lexemes survived exclusively in dialectal speech as a result of this standardization. While such exclusion may enhance communicative efficiency at the national level, it also reduces lexical diversity and obscures historical layers of the language. From this perspective, dialects serve as alternative spaces where lexical continuity is preserved outside the constraints of the literary norm.

The results of this study have important implications for Uzbek lexicography and language policy. Ignoring dialectal archaisms leads to an incomplete representation of the language's lexical richness and historical depth. Wright and Budin 1) argue that comprehensive dictionaries should account for regional and historical variation in order to reflect the true complexity of a language⁹.

Incorporating archaic dialectal lexemes into modern explanatory and dialectological dictionaries would not only enrich lexical resources but also contribute to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. As Cabré (1999) emphasizes, lexicography plays a crucial role in mediating between linguistic description and cultural preservation. Systematic documentation of dialectal vocabulary should therefore be considered an essential component of long-term language planning and cultural policy¹⁰.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the dialects of the Qashqadaryo region preserve a substantial and linguistically significant layer of archaic lexical units that reflect earlier stages of the development of the Uzbek language. The analysis has shown that these lexemes exhibit different patterns of interaction with the literary language: some archaic words retain their original meanings and functions, others undergo semantic narrowing or stylistic reorientation, while a number of lexical

⁹ Wright S. E., Budin G. Handbook of Terminology Management. – Amsterdam : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001. – 564 p.

¹⁰ Cabré M. T. Terminology: Theory, Methods and Applications. – Amsterdam : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999. – 247 p.



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units have disappeared entirely from the standard norm and survive exclusively in regional speech.

The findings confirm that dialectal varieties play a crucial role in maintaining linguistic continuity and preserving historical layers of vocabulary that are no longer productive in the literary language. Through the preservation of archaic lexical units, Qashqadaryo dialects function as living repositories of linguistic and cultural memory, offering valuable insights into the diachronic evolution of Uzbek lexis and the socio-cultural conditions that shape language change.

The study also underscores the methodological and theoretical importance of dialectological research for Uzbek linguistics. Without systematic investigation of regional speech, significant portions of the language's lexical heritage remain undocumented or underrepresented. Archaic lexical units preserved in dialects not only enrich our understanding of historical language stages but also contribute to a more comprehensive description of contemporary Uzbek linguistic diversity. From a practical perspective, the results highlight the need to integrate dialectal archaic vocabulary into modern lexicographic and descriptive practices. The inclusion of such lexemes in explanatory and dialectological dictionaries would enhance the representativeness of Uzbek lexicography and support broader efforts aimed at preserving intangible cultural heritage.

Future research may build upon the present study by employing quantitative methods to assess the frequency and distribution of archaic lexical units across different sub-dialects of the Qashqadaryo region. Further investigations may also explore the possibilities of incorporating dialectal archaisms into digital corpora and modern lexicographic resources, thereby ensuring their preservation and accessibility for both linguistic research and cultural education.

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