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# MECHANISMS OF GRADONYMIC RELATIONS IN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS: A TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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## Abstract

Gradonymy, the semantical relationship formed as a result of degree scale differentiation, has been a popular area of research within lexicology but has not been sufficiently studied at the level of phraseology. This paper will analyse the mechanisms used to express gradonymic relationships in English and Uzbek through phraseological units (PUs) in both languages. A comparative typological analysis and semiotic and context-based parameters will be used to review the five primary mechanisms used to express gradonymy: 1) scalar lexical substitution; 2) metaphor as a form of intensification; 3) syntactical amplification; 4) evaluative scaling; and 5) culturally established conceptual gradation.

The results indicate that while both languages share the same universal cognitive basis for the conceptualisation of scalar concepts, they differ in the form of expression. English primarily relies on analytically based forms of intensification and metaphor; however, in contrast, the Uzbek language tends to rely heavily on repetition, expressive constructions, and culturally determined metaphoric/classificational intensification. All results from this paper have implications for phraseological semantics, theories of gradation, and typology across languages.

**Keywords:** Gradonymy, phraseology, scalar relations, semantic gradation, linguistic typology, English, Uzbek



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## **Introduction**

Gradation is an essential organizing concept for both cognitive processes and language. Speakers understand the world not only in terms of binary opposites, but also along continuum scales. In order to communicate this type of understanding, we develop linguistic codes which create gradients using lexical, grammatical, and phraseological resources.

Gradonymy refers to the types of semantic relations that exist between linguistic units based on how much they align with the same scalar dimension (Cruse, 2004). While the subject of gradonymy has been studied mainly from the perspective of the lexical semantics of adjectives and adverbs, it has received relatively little attention in terms of its phraseological applications. Many phraseological units (e.g., idiomatic expressions, fixed or set expressions or phrases) carry both weak and strong meanings with regard to gradation, and yet their organization on a scale has received little or no typological consideration.

In this paper, we will explore the ways that gradonymy is generated by phraseological units in English and Uzbek, and will explore three topics in relation to this investigation: (1) the structural and semantic means by which gradation occurs in phraseology; (2) similarities and differences in the realization of these means between English and Uzbek; and (3) typological differences and similarities between the two linguistic systems. By analyzing a Germanic analytical language (English) and a Turkic agglutinating language (Uzbek), this study provides a base for larger constructive modelling of the typology of semantics and comparative study of phraseology.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Gradonymy and Scalar Semantics**

Three semantic relationships between words exist: (i) words with opposite meanings and/or antonyms (ii) words that have different meanings or synonyms (iii) words that represent a scale or degree of meaning (i.e., a continuum). An example of this would be the words 'cold' 'chilly' and 'freezing', which represent increasing levels of temperature along a continuum. Scalar connections all begin as conceptual continua which reflect how humans visualize reality (Lyons 1977).



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According to Cruse (2004), gradable meaning is basic to the structure of the semantics of words.

In addition to semantically organizing meaning, gradation is conceptually connected to conceptual metaphors and the use of physical senses to form conceptual understanding (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Intensity in human thought can often be understood in terms of metaphorical heat, pressure, height, and force.

## **2.2 Phraseology and Degree Expression**

Relative to his 1998 study, phraseologists have typically concentrated on idioms, idiomaticity, figurativeness, culture, and cultural context when discussing phraseological units. Thirdly, develop, and refine your knowledge of phraseological units through their degrees of intensity and degree of idiomaticity; as well as the degrees of intensity and degree of idiomaticity of other types of expression in general.

For instance:

- a bit upset
- deeply upset
- devastated

These expressions form a scalar chain. In Uzbek, similar gradation appears:

- xafa bo‘lmoq (to be upset)
- qattiq xafa bo‘lmoq (to be very upset)
- dili vayron bo‘lmoq (to be devastated)

Such examples demonstrate that phraseological systems may reflect gradonymic paradigms.

## **3. Methodology**

Typological-comparative analysis Analysis with semantic component Descriptive and contextual analysis The material consists of two hundred (200) English phrases and two hundred (200) Uzbek phrases sourced from significant idioms and phraseological dictionaries and collections. The phrases were selected because they contained an intensity value, emotion, evaluation, scalar value, or were used quantitatively. The analyses performed were conducted to ascertain the



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structural and semantic components common to all phrases, which were used to form scalar relationships between phraseological expressions.

#### **4. Mechanisms of Gradonymic Relations in Phraseological Units**

The research identifies five principal mechanisms through which gradonymy manifests in phraseology.

##### **4.1 Scalar Lexical Substitution**

One common mechanism involves maintaining structural similarity while substituting lexical elements that encode increasing intensity.

##### **English examples:**

- a little worried
- deeply concerned
- sick with worry

##### **Uzbek examples:**

- xavotir olmoq
- qattiq xavotir olmoq
- ich-etini yemoq

Here, gradation arises through lexical intensification. The expressions form a semantic continuum from mild to extreme emotional states.

English tends to use adverbial intensifiers (deeply, terribly, extremely), whereas Uzbek frequently uses lexical or idiomatic amplification.

##### **4.2 Metaphorical Intensification**

Metaphor is a central mechanism in expressing degree. Intensity is often conceptualized as heat, explosion, or physical destruction.

##### **English:**

- annoyed
- boiling with anger
- exploding with rage



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**Uzbek:**

- jahli chiqmoq
- g‘azabdan yonmoq
- ich-etini yemoq

Both languages employ embodied metaphors, but Uzbek expressions often carry stronger emotional imagery rooted in cultural conceptualization.

### **4.3 Syntactic Amplification and Repetition**

Uzbek phraseology frequently uses repetition as a device of intensification:

- yig‘lab-yig‘lab charchamoq
- qon yig‘lamoq

Repetition strengthens semantic intensity.

English more commonly relies on modifier stacking:

- very, very sorry
- absolutely devastated

Thus, while both languages intensify meaning syntactically, Uzbek relies more on repetition and expressive structures.

### **4.4 Evaluative Scaling**

Gradonymic relations may arise through evaluation.

**English:**

- not bad
- good
- excellent
- outstanding

**Uzbek:**

- yaxshi
- juda yaxshi
- beqiyos darajada zo‘r

Evaluation introduces a value-based scale. Cultural norms influence how positive or negative intensity is expressed.



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#### 4.5 Conceptual and Cultural Scaling

Certain scalar chains reflect universal human experiences, such as illness or fatigue.

##### **English:**

- under the weather
- seriously ill
- at death's door

##### **Uzbek:**

- betob
- og'ir ahvolda
- jon taslim qilmoq

The conceptual progression from mild to extreme condition is universal, yet metaphorical framing differs culturally.

#### 5. Discussion

The statistical analysis suggests that there is a relationship between gradonyms in phraseology which are systematic in their semantic structure rather than being random or unconnected. Typological Variations

1. Universal characteristics of both participants include use of metaphorical scalar representations; and reference to degrees of intensity represented as conceptual continuums; as well as a high productivity of both emotional and evaluative gradations
2. Particular characteristics of both languages - over all, English prefers analytic intensifications with scalar representations created by modifiers; while Uzbek typically employs many repetitions of the same item (repetitive intensification); and culturally distinct representations exist in the thematic structure of most Uzbek Idioms (representing the national perspective of the people). These findings support the conclusion that there is a cognitive basis behind all gradonyms found in phraseology, but the linguistic type determines their structural formation.



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## Conclusion

The research presented here has explored how gradonymic relationships are realized in (1) English and (2) Uzbek phraseological units within a comparative-typological framework. It was found that the phenomenon of gradonymy in phraseology represents systematic semantic structures based on scalar conceptualizations – rather than coincidental occurrences. The analysis identified five major mechanisms: (1) scalar lexical substitution; (2) metaphorical intensification; (3) syntactic amplification; (4) evaluative scaling; and (5) conceptually embedded culturally based gradation. These mechanisms indicate that phraseological systems, like lexical systems, encode degrees of intensity, emotional arousal, evaluation, and experiential severity along continuous lines of structure (i.e., scalar systems). Accordingly, in terms of producing scalar meaning, both English and Uzbek use universal cognitive principles (e.g., through metaphoric and evaluative progression); however, they employ different structural realizations reflecting typological and cultural characteristics. For example, analytic languages (like English) tend to isolate predicates via analytic intensifiers, or use modifiers with gradated meaning to express degree; while agglutinating languages (like Uzbek) tend to rely on both expressive repetition and visual amplification of their culturally situated conceptualizations to create degree-based meaning. Thus, there are general structural differences between analytic and agglutinating systems of language that correspond to the ways in which different cultures conceptualize their worlds. Overall, this research expands the theoretical scope of gradonymic relations beyond the lexical domain and emphasizes the need to also consider phraseological structures within semantic typologies. By demonstrating that the creation of scalar meaning through idioms follows identifiable structural and cognitive processes, this research supports cross-linguistic findings in the area of phraseology; this research has implications for future research on gradonymic relations among phraseological structures using corpus-based and quantitative methodologies.



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