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A Semantic Analysis of Distinct Lexical Elements in the Layer of Uzbek Children's Folklore

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into a semantic examination of the distinctive lexicon within the lexical layer of Uzbek children's folklore. As a vital segment of oral folk art, children's folklore serves as a reflection of the national culture, customs, and values. Specific words encountered in folkloric texts distinguish themselves through their semantic qualities and play a crucial role in the formation of children's worldview, aesthetic preferences, and linguistic development. This paper explores the etymology, meaning, and functional characteristics of these words, offering insight into their significance and impact on the structure of children's folklore.

Keywords: Folklore, seasonal songs, lullabies, sayings, imperatives, children's songs.

INTRODUCTION

Uzbek children's folklore is an inseparable component of the broader tapestry of oral folk art, encapsulating the essence of national culture, values, and traditions. Within this folklore, various genres such as lullabies, playful rhymes, and nursery songs significantly influence the speech, emotional, and social development of children. The specific lexical elements used within these genres contribute substantially to shaping children's perceptions, expanding their linguistic capacities, and enriching

their understanding of the world. Much like any other nation's distinct oral traditions, the Uzbek people have cultivated their own unique forms of oral expressions over centuries, forged by industrious individuals and refined through generations. These oral traditions stand as timeless treasures of folk art.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Oral folk art is articulated through expressions like "folklore" and "folk poetic creativity." The term "folklore" was first coined in 1846 by the scholar William Thomas. It is derived from the English terms "folk" (meaning people) and "lore" (denoting knowledge or wisdom), which collectively refer to the artistic expressions of the people. The usage of the term "folklore" gained widespread adoption in various parts of the world between 1880 and 1990. In Uzbekistan, the term began to take hold in the mid-1930s, with the publication of Hodi Zarif's "Uzbek Folklore" in 1939 playing a pivotal role in solidifying its usage within Uzbek linguistic circles. Prior to that, the expression "Uzbek oral literature" had been prevalent, but due to its ambiguity and lack of specificity in describing the field, it was gradually phased out in favor of more precise terms such as "Uzbek folklore" and "Uzbek folk oral art."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Children's oral poetic creativity encompasses a broad spectrum of expressive forms, including songs, traditional games, game-related chants, folktales, tongue twisters, and riddles – many of which originate from the cultural and imaginative frameworks constructed by adults on behalf of children. Predominantly authored by grown-ups, these oral traditions serve as integral pedagogical tools, fostering children's cognitive, emotional, and physical maturation. Functioning as an educational medium, children's folklore is instrumental in nurturing ethical consciousness and reinforcing culturally valorized moral values. The corpus of children's oral literature represents a dynamic synthesis of the adult and juvenile worlds, culminating in a

structured and thematically rich poetic and performative expression system.

Mothers, in particular, play a pivotal role in the evolution and transmission of this folkloric heritage. Their contributions are foundational in the genesis of lullabies, soothing lyrical expressions, ritualistic chants, and humorous rhymes—all of which are composed to calm, entertain, and spiritually bond with the child. Among the classifications within children's oral traditions, the category of *aytim-olqish* (blessings and good wishes) holds a position of considerable prominence following lullabies. These verses are typically performed during early childhood and are imbued with melodic and rhythmic qualities. They are customarily recited during specific rites of passage such as the child's first placement in the cradle, the first tooth eruption, ritual bathing, or the burning of aromatic herbs (*isiriq*). One illustrative example of such a chant – performed during the cradle ceremony – goes as follows:

Allasi keldi,
Babasi qochdi,
Qoch, qoch, egasi keldi.
Egalari kirsin,
Bobovlari chiqsin,
Uyqusi beshikda qolsin. [1: 5]

In this poetic incantation, the words *baba* and *bobov* have, in some linguistic traditions, been interpreted to signify "dog." However, cross-cultural comparisons, particularly with Slavic and Czech folklore, suggest that *baba* can also denote an archetypal witch figure – most notably Baba Yaga. This character, extensively documented in European folklore, including by English traveler D. Fletcher in his 1588 text About the Russian State, is portrayed as a grotesque and fearsome woman who resides in a bone-fenced hut and preys upon unsuspecting children.

Another folkloric blessing, specific to the Khorezm dialect and performed five days postnatally by a traditional assembly of seven women (often grandmothers), includes the following lines:

Bavak, bavak, joni bavak,
Xudoning durdoni bavak,
Otasining moli bavak,
Onasining joni bavak.

In this regional poetic form, the term *bavak* functions as a synonym for “infant” or “newborn.” The ceremonial recitation of such verses underscores the communal and maternal investment in the well-being of the child.

Dardingni olay, dedim,
Birovga sotay, dedim.
Pulingni olay, dedim,
Chodirshab tikay, dedim.
Raxtingni uray, dedim.

The word *raxt* refers to the ceremonial practice of placing bedding and pillows intended for the bride and groom on top of a chest during a wedding [2:161].

A distinct and culturally rich subgenre within children's poetic folklore is constituted by seasonal and ritualistic songs, which hold particular significance and are typically performed by children in alignment with the cycles of nature. These compositions, though now integrated into children's oral traditions, have their roots in adult folklore, having initially been authored and sung by elders before gradually permeating the repertoire of younger generations. Canonical examples include “Yo Ramadan,” “Oppoqjon,” “Gunafsha,” “Chitti Gul,” and “Boychechak,” each encapsulating a nuanced blend of ritualistic and seasonal themes.

Likewise, “Tushbera qaynaydi-yo, Qozonda o‘ynaydi-yo” reflects linguistic evolution, where “tushbera” – a Tajik variant of “chuchvara” (dumpling) – is etymologically rooted in the term “joshpara,” derived from Persian and Central Asian dialects. The component “josh” signifies "to boil," while “para” refers to a "fragment" or "portion," and the term was commonly utilized until the 10th century [3].

Additionally, seasonal and ritualistic songs encompass two unique subtypes known as hukmlagich (command chants) and yalinchoq (pleading songs), which are deeply entwined with natural phenomena and reflect the vestiges of ancient totemic and animistic belief systems. Historically, such incantations functioned as spiritual invocations – addressed to elements like wind, rain, thunder, and celestial bodies – and while many have undergone semantic transformation, vestiges of their ritualistic origins persist.

The “yalinchoq” “Oymomoxon hulla...” directed toward the moon is emblematic of animistic thought; its lyrical plea for longevity addressed to a celestial entity underscores the spiritual worldview embedded in early oral traditions. The term “hulla,” borrowed from Arabic, signifies a delicate, ornate garment, further enhancing the song’s poetic imagery.

The chant “Xol, xol, Uyinga o‘t ketdi...” is directed at the ladybug, locally known as xonqizi, named for the vivid dot-like markings on its wings (xol meaning "spot"). This chant is rooted in a folk legend wherein a king’s daughter, having fallen in love with a poor shepherd, is cursed by her father to transform into an insect – a mythological narrative that explains the creature’s origin through metaphorical storytelling [4: 344].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this analysis affirm that Uzbek children's folklore contains an array of lexemes that not only enrich children's linguistic capacity but also reflect the cultural, historical, and ontological frameworks of the society. These lexical forms serve as instruments of both linguistic development and cultural transmission. Furthermore, their semantic deconstruction aids in tracing their historical evolution, contemporary usage, and enduring presence within the Uzbek linguistic landscape.

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