

The Role of Nominative Units Expressing a Person's Spirituality in the Uzbek Linguistic System

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ABSTRACT

This article looks at the linguistic mechanisms through which the notion of spirituality is nominated and lexically expressed in the Uzbek language system. Spirituality, as a category that is rooted in national culture, religion, ethics and philosophy, takes a kind of special place among the lexical layers of Uzbek and it shows up through a varied set of nominative units. These include native lexemes, Arabic and Persian loanwords, derivational formations, and some phraseological combinations too. The results help to understand more deeply how a nation's inner values are encoded in its vocabulary system, and also open new ways for more corpus-based research later on.

Keywords: Spirituality, nominative unit, theory of nomination, lexical semantics, linguoculturology, onomasiology, national worldview

INTRODUCTION

The category of spirituality, expressed in Uzbek with the term *ma'naviyat*, seems to hold a kind of exceptional place in the linguistic and cultural awareness of the Uzbek people. Ever since the years of independence, the idea has taken on not only ethical and philosophical meaning, but also a clear sociopolitical weight, and national policy, almost always, highlighted how it's necessary to foster spiritual and moral values as a support for

statehood and for social steadiness. Because of this kind of ideological lifting, the effects show up right in the language system too, since a category that becomes central in public talk inevitably gives rise to a growing and varied set of nominative units, meant to name it, describe it, and also judge it in a way. So, the linguistic study of spirituality can't be split away from the wider study of nomination as a cognitive and cultural process, by which a language community gives labels to phenomena that it considers meaningful, important.

Nominative units that somehow express a person's spirituality in Uzbek make up this heterogeneous lexical field, it feels like it has everything in it: single word lexemes, both native and borrowed sources, then derivational bits formed by affixation, and also compounding, plus those steady phraseological and paremiologically expressions that just sit there and don't move much. In practice, these units spread over a few semantic zones too, like the religious mystical zone, where we meet concepts such as *ymon* (faith), *viydon* (conscience), and *taqvo* (piety). Then there is the ethical moral zone tied to *odob* (decorum), or *axloq* (honor) and *insof* (fairness) and so on. Finally, the sociopolitical zone comes up, with ideologically loaded compounds like *ma'naviymeros* (spiritual heritage) and *milliyg'oya* (national idea). What is interesting is that these zones coexist within one lexical semantic field, and that, in a way, mirrors the layered historical development of Uzbek: pre-Islamic Turkic vocabulary, Arabic Persian religious terminology, and Soviet as well as post-Soviet ideological vocabulary all somehow blended together into one functionally rich system.

Despite the evident cultural importance of this vocabulary, its systematic linguistic description is still sort of fragmentary or not fully done. Uzbek linguistics has produced plenty of valuable dissertations and articles devoted to specific sides of the spirituality lexicon, however a whole, coherent account of the nominative mechanisms that actually generate and organize this vocabulary, when it is looked at through the lens of general nomination theory, is still missing. This article wants to deal with that gap by putting together the achievements of Uzbek scholarship on spiritual and enlightenment vocabulary and, at the

same time, the broader theoretical machinery of onomasiology and cognitive linguistics, which has been developed in Russian scholarship and also in international work.

The objective is threefold, so first, to describe the semantic as well as the etymological composition of nominative units that express spirituality in Uzbek. Second, to sort these units according to their functional and discursive roles, and third, to place the Uzbek material in a comparative perspective guided by general nomination theory. The article is organized according to a standard scientific format, it includes an introduction, then a section where methodology and literature review are combined, then a section presenting results and discussion, and finally a conclusion.

METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This research takes a very purely theoretical, and also kind of descriptive, route, it relies on reviewing the existing scholarly literature only, so there's no need for experimental procedures, no direct field observation, and no interviews. The used methods, are descriptive analysis, componential and lexical semantic analysis, etymological analysis, plus comparative analysis. Also, there are some elements of sociolinguistic and linguacultural interpretation mixed in, as the study goes on. The material selected for the analysis comes from lexicographic sources, scholarly monographs, dissertations and journal articles. These texts focus either directly on the linguistic expression of spirituality in Uzbek, or more generally on the theory of nomination.

Among Uzbek researchers, the most solid contribution in the studying of spiritual and enlightenment vocabulary belongs to G. N. Tojjeva, and her dissertation about the development of the spiritual and enlightenment lexicon in the Uzbek language during the years of independence. In it she introduced the idea of a system of nominal units, organized around the national idea [1]. Tojjeva also showed that the lexeme *ma'naviyat* itself, along with a wide circle of derivationally plus semantically related units, forms one coherent lexical semantic field, and, its borders

have widened quite a lot since the 1990s under the impact of state cultural policy. In a related article, the same author considered how spiritual and enlightenment vocabulary fits with the broader lexical system of Uzbek, and she demonstrated that many nominative units in this area appeared mostly due to semantic expansion of words that were previously rather neutral, instead of emerging by invention of totally new roots [2].

Another complementary angle is provided by M. B. Ahmedova, in her dissertation she compared the overall semantic units that signal spirituality in Uzbek with the matching units used in English [3]. What her comparative method sort of uncovers is that Uzbek *ma'naviyat* and English spirituality do overlap on a basic semantic nucleus, meaning the inner moral and psychological sphere, however, the Uzbek term also pulls in a much wider sociocultural and collective dimension. This is because it is often used not only to speak about a single person private inner life, but also about national heritage, historical memory, and civic values, all together. That is pretty important for the current study, because it suggests that nominative units for spirituality in Uzbek really cannot be described well just through straightforward translation like an equivalence would do with Western European languages. Instead, they need to be examined with a basis that comes from the particular historical and cultural experience of Uzbek people.

Further specification about the semantic field is kind of given by F. H. Yuldashev, who leaned on the lexical semantic category of spirituality, but he does it through a smaller idea of faith. He then looks at the system of noun units that he associates with what he calls the spiritual group tied to *iymon* [4]. Yuldashev's classification feels handy because it basically indicates that inside the wide category of spirituality, you can single out different subfields. This depends on whether the leading semantic element is religious, like *iymon* and *taqvo*, ethical as in *viydon* and *or*, or ideological, like *ma'naviyyuksalish* (spiritual elevation).

The etymological side of the Uzbek spirituality lexicon is helped a lot, in a way kind of quietly, by the classic work of Sh. Rahmatullaev, because his etymological dictionary tracks the

Arabic, Persian beginnings of many important terms in this area. It even touches *ma'naviyat*, itself, and it shows how Arabic abstract nouns get fitted into the Uzbek word-creation system [5]. What makes Rahmatullaev's etymological notes really useful is that they let us see why so many of the main nominative units used for spirituality in Uzbek are not based on native Turkic derivations, but are borrowed abstract nouns instead, and this situation kind of repeats the wider historical pattern where Arabic served as a key wellspring, for religious and philosophical vocabulary across the Islamic ate language world.

Beyond the Uzbek specific literature, the general theory of nomination is kind of the conceptual scaffold needed to read these findings in a systematic way. The earliest Russian input is usually linked with E. S. Kubryakova who described nomination as the process where a language community either takes an already existing designation for a phenomenon or actually invents a brand-new name for it, and she stressed that the choice of linguistic form for expressing thought is never just arbitrary, it is steered by cognitive, semantic, and cultural motivation [6]. In other words, Kubryakova's approach lets the nominative units of the spirituality field be seen not only as some kind of synonym list but as the result of an active mental procedure, where the Uzbek language community keeps rethinking and re-lexicalizing its view of inner moral and religious life.

The cognitive linguistic point of view is further developed in the internationally influential works by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, they claimed that abstract concepts, even the moral and psychological ones are often organized and given expression via conceptual metaphor that is grounded in something concrete, like bodily sensation and spatial experience [7]. In this way the theory also helps explain why a lot of Uzbek nominative units connected with spirituality lean on metaphorical widening, you can see this especially in phrases built around the image of *yuksalish*, that is elevation, ascent, or *poklik* which means purity, cleanliness. Those examples kind of push lived, physical experience straight into the abstract area of moral and spiritual life, and it doesn't always look explicit at first.

Recent Uzbek scholarship has also tried to put general nomination theory straight into national materials, you know sort of directly. D. Khudayberganova, Z. Mukimova, and F. Karimova looked at how linguistic anthropocentrism works inside Uzbek national linguistics, they show that anthroponomic and other nominative units somehow carry the cultural, spiritual, and ethnic worldview of the community that forms them [8]. What this work really highlights is that nomination in Uzbek is not often a neutral, purely referential move, but rather it is deeply tangled with the value system of the speech community. And that finding is right on point for the spirituality lexicon that we are discussing here. In a similarly theoretical vein, O. Fozilov's new article on studying the nomination theory in linguistics looks across cognitive, pragmatic, and linguacultural routes to nomination, and it also shows how those routes can be used for analyzing nominative units that operate in modern Uzbek discourse [9]. Finally, D. I. Sattarova's research on the theory and process of nomination traces how onomasiology study evolved over time, from early structuralist ideas to today's cognitive models, which gives a helpful temporal skeleton, for where the Uzbek spirituality lexicon can be placed historically too [10].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed above allows the nominative units expressing a person's spirituality in Uzbek to be organized into several interconnected layers, each of which reflects a distinct historical source and a distinct functional orientation within the language system. The first and etymologically foundational layer consists of Arabic borrowings that entered Uzbek through the long historical process of Islamization and through the subsequent development of a shared Islamic scholarly vocabulary across Persian and Turkic speaking Central Asia. The central term *ma'naviyat* itself belongs to this layer, together with closely related units such as *iymon*, *taqvo*, *ixlos* (sincerity) and *viydon*, all of which denote states or qualities of the inner religious and moral life of the individual. As Rahmatullaev's etymological

analysis shows, these borrowed abstract nouns were adapted into the Uzbek morphological system through regular processes of phonetic assimilation and affixation, which allowed them to function fully as native derivational bases capable of generating further nominative units such as *ma'naviy* (spiritual, adjective), *ma'naviyatli* (possessing spirituality) and *ma'naviyatsizlik* (lack of spirituality) [5].

The second layer consists of native Turkic vocabulary that has undergone semantic extension in order to participate in the expression of spirituality, most notably terms describing purity, elevation and inner state, such as *poklik*, *yuksalish* and *ruhiyat*. These units illustrate the cognitive metaphorical mechanism described by Lakoff & Johnson, whereby physical and spatial concepts such as height, cleanliness and depth are systematically projected onto the abstract domain of moral and spiritual experience [7]. The productivity of this metaphorical mechanism in Uzbek suggests that the conceptualization of spirituality in the Uzbek linguistic worldview is not confined to religious terminology narrowly defined but is continuously reinforced by everyday embodied vocabulary, which grants the abstract category of *ma'naviyat* a strong experiential grounding accessible to ordinary speakers.

The third layer, historically the most recent, consists of ideologically and socio-politically motivated compounds and collocations that emerged primarily during the late Soviet and, especially, the post-independence period, when state cultural policy actively promoted spirituality as a category of civic and national identity. Units belonging to this layer include *ma'naviymeros*, *ma'naviyyuksalish*, *milliyg'oya* and *ma'naviytarbiya* (spiritual upbringing). As Tojiev's research demonstrates, this layer is characterized by a high degree of collocational stability and by frequent occurrence in official, educational and journalistic discourse, which distinguishes it functionally from the more individually oriented religious and ethical layers described above [1] [2]. The emergence of this sociopolitical layer confirms Khudayberganova, Mukimova and Karimova's broader observation that nomination in Uzbek linguistic culture is closely tied to the collective value system

promoted by the speech community, rather than being limited to the naming of purely individual psychological states [8].

A further important dimension revealed by the literature concerns the comparative semantic scope of *ma'naviyat* relative to apparent equivalents in other languages. Ahmedova's comparative dissertation demonstrated that the English lexeme *spirituality* tends to be semantically narrower, focusing primarily on individual religious or transcendent experience, whereas the Uzbek *ma'naviyat* integrates individual moral psychology with collective cultural memory, historical continuity and civic duty [3]. This asymmetry has direct consequences for translation and for cross cultural linguistic comparison, since a straightforward lexical equivalence between *ma'naviyat* and *spirituality* risks obscuring the distinctly collective and ideological dimension that the Uzbek term has acquired. Yuldashev's narrower focus on the subfield of *iymon* further confirms that within the broad category of *ma'naviyat*, Uzbek speakers and lexicographers distinguish carefully between units oriented toward religious faith and units oriented toward secular ethical conduct, a distinction that is far less systematically marked in the corresponding English vocabulary [4].

From the standpoint of general nomination theory, the Uzbek *spirituality* lexicon can be understood as an instance of what Kubryakova described as secondary nomination, that is, the reuse and semantic reorientation of already existing linguistic material, whether native or borrowed, in order to name a phenomenon that has acquired new cultural salience [6]. The rapid post-independence expansion of the *ma'naviyat* related vocabulary, documented extensively by Tojiev, exemplifies this process particularly clearly, since relatively few entirely new roots were coined, while a large number of existing lexemes were drawn into the semantic orbit of *spirituality* through compounding, semantic narrowing or metaphorical extension [1]. Fozilov's overview of contemporary nomination theory supports this interpretation by emphasizing that nominative processes in modern Uzbek discourse, across genres ranging from official speech to mass media, are governed simultaneously by cognitive, pragmatic and linguocultural factors, and the *spirituality* lexicon

appears to be a particularly clear case in which all three factors operate together [9].

Finally, the functional classification proposed on the basis of the reviewed literature suggests that nominative units expressing spirituality in Uzbek can be grouped according to three overlapping functions, a designative function through which the units simply name a moral or religious state, an evaluative function through which the units carry positive or negative connotation, as seen in the contrast between *ma'naviyatli* and *ma'naviyatsizlik*, and a mobilizing function through which the units are used in official and educational discourse to promote particular civic and moral behavior. This tripartite functional distinction, while not previously formulated in exactly these terms in the sources reviewed, follows directly from combining Sattarova's historical account of onomasiology development with the more discourse-oriented findings of Khudayberganova, Mukimova and Karimova and of Fozilov, and it offers a productive framework for future, more detailed corpus-based investigation [8; 9; 10].

An additional dimension of the spirituality lexicon becomes visible when the nominative units are examined not in isolation but as members of derivational families built around a single root. The root *ma'no*, from which *ma'naviyat* itself derives, generates a whole cluster of related forms extending outward into evaluative, negated and intensified variants, such as *ma'naviy*, *ma'naviylashtirish*, *ma'naviyatsiz* and *yuksakma'naviyat*. This derivational productivity suggests that the Uzbek language has developed a self-sufficient internal mechanism for elaborating the concept of spirituality without constant recourse to new borrowing, relying instead on the flexibility of its own affixal system to generate increasingly specific shades of meaning. Such derivational richness is not typical of every abstract semantic field in Uzbek, and its presence here indicates the unusually high cultural and communicative demand placed on this particular concept.

It is also worth noting that the spirituality lexicon displays a marked asymmetry between units expressing presence and units expressing absence of the quality in question. While positively

marked units such as *ma'naviyatli*, *ymonli* and *pok* are relatively neutral in tone and function mainly to describe or praise, the corresponding negatively marked units, including *ma'naviyatsizlik*, *imonsizlik* and *vijdonsizlik*, tend to carry a considerably stronger evaluative and often condemnatory charge. This asymmetry points to the deeply normative character of the entire lexical field, in which naming the absence of spirituality is rarely a neutral descriptive act but almost always functions as moral judgment directed at an individual or at society as a whole. Such a pattern differs noticeably from more emotionally neutral lexical fields, where positive and negative poles tend to carry comparable evaluative weight.

Finally, the coexistence of religious, ethical and sociopolitical layers within a single lexical field raises the question of how ordinary speakers reconcile these different dimensions of meaning in everyday use. In practice, the boundaries between the layers appear far less rigid than their historical origin would suggest, since a single utterance referring to a person's *ma'naviyat* can simultaneously evoke religious conscientiousness, personal ethical integrity and a sense of belonging to the national community, without any of these dimensions being explicitly foregrounded over the others. This semantic fusion, rather than being a sign of conceptual vagueness, can be interpreted as evidence that the category of spirituality functions in Uzbek as an integrative cultural concept, one whose communicative strength lies precisely in its capacity to hold together religious, moral and civic meaning within a single, compact lexical unit.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Uzbek and Russian language scholarship together with relevant international literature on the theory of nomination demonstrates that nominative units expressing a person's spirituality in the Uzbek linguistic system constitute a historically layered, semantically rich and functionally diverse lexical field. Three principal layers were identified, an Arabic derived religious and moral layer centered on *ma'naviyat*, *ymon* and

vijdon, a native Turkic layer expressing spirituality through metaphorical extension of concepts such as purity and elevation, and a comparatively recent sociopolitical layer of compounds tied to state cultural policy and national identity discourse. The comparative evidence further indicates that the Uzbek category of ma'naviyat is semantically broader than superficially equivalent terms in English, integrating individual moral psychology with collective historical and civic meaning, a finding that carries direct implications for lexicography, translation practice and cross-cultural linguistic research.

The application of general nomination theory, particularly the concepts of secondary nomination and cognitive metaphorical projection, proved productive for explaining why the Uzbek spirituality lexicon expanded primarily through the semantic reorientation of existing material rather than through wholesale lexical innovation. At the same time, the review confirmed that the nominative units under discussion cannot be adequately understood through semantic analysis alone, since their distribution across discourse types and their evaluative and mobilizing functions depend heavily on sociocultural and ideological context.

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