

Towards a Classification of the Uzbek Lexicon in Verbal Communication: Idiolect, Sociolect and the Standard Variety

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ABSTRACT

Dictionaries record one lexicon; speakers deploy another. Greetings, discourse markers, interjections, address terms and modal expressions carry much of the work of ordinary conversation, yet Uzbek lexicographic practice represents them thinly and Uzbek descriptions of the lexicon give them no settled place. This paper proposes a classification designed to accommodate them. The classification has two dimensions that are held to vary independently. The first sorts lexical items by function, distinguishing four content categories (referring, property-denoting, quantifying and predicating expressions) from five interactional categories (routine formulae, connectives and discourse markers, interjections, address terms and parentheticals, and modal expressions). The second sorts the same items by the community that shares them, distinguishing the idiolect, the sociolect and the standard variety. Crossing the two yields a grid within which items can be located and compared across languages. Uzbek material illustrates each category. The paper closes by stating five predictions the framework generates, the corpora required to test them, and the observations that would count against it. The proposal is theoretical. No corpus analysis is reported here, and no claim is made about the frequency or distribution of the items discussed.

Keywords: Lexicon, idiolect, sociolect, standard variety, discourse markers, routine formulae, lexical classification, Uzbek

1. INTRODUCTION

Words spoken in conversation and words listed in dictionaries do not form the same set. A speaker of Uzbek greeting a colleague, hesitating before a refusal or softening a request draws on items that the explanatory dictionary either omits or records without the information needed to use them. Charchamang, addressed to someone at work, is not a wish that the addressee should avoid tiredness. Mayli at the opening of a turn does not mean what mayli means as a predicate. These are ordinary facts about ordinary talk, and they sit awkwardly inside a description of the lexicon organised around nouns, adjectives and verbs.

This paper sets out a way of describing the lexicon that has room for them. The claim is not that the items in question have been ignored. Uzbek grammars treat interjections (*undovso'zlar*), modal words (modal *so'zlar*), vocatives (*undalma*) and parentheticals (*kirishso'zlar*), and Uzbek phraseology has collected greeting and blessing formulae in some quantity. The claim is that these items are handled as scattered residues of a part-of-speech classification rather than as a coherent functional class, and that the classification they are residues of was built for written sentences.

Two further observations motivate the proposal. First, a lexical item belongs to a community as well as to a category. Domla is available to every speaker of Uzbek; a chain of technical collocations may be shared only within one profession; a favoured hedge may belong to one speaker. Second, community membership and functional class vary independently of each other. Every functional category has members at every level of sharing, and an item does not change what it does in an utterance by becoming more or less widely shared. A description that runs the two questions together cannot state either of them clearly.

The paper is a theoretical proposal. It reports no corpus study and offers no quantitative results. What it offers is a framework, illustrations of each of its categories drawn from Uzbek, and a specification of the work that would establish or refute it. Section 2 reviews the descriptive traditions the framework draws on.

Section 3 states the framework. Section 4 illustrates it. Section 5 sets out how it could be tested. Section 6 states its limitations.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. *The dictionary lexicon and the lexicon in use*

Lexicography has long treated the gap between recorded and deployed vocabulary as a working constraint rather than a defect. Atkins & Rundell (2008) describe the dictionary entry as a negotiated compromise between what a word can mean and what an editor has room to record. Hanks (2013) presses the point further: word meaning is a property of words in the patterns they habitually occur in, not of words in isolation, and an entry that lists senses without patterns supplies half of what a user needs. Jezek & Hanks (2010) show that the sets of words filling a given argument slot do not map onto conceptual categories in any stable way, and that their membership shifts from verb to verb. Pustejovsky (1995) reaches a related conclusion from a different direction, arguing that a static sense inventory cannot generate the readings that context produces.

These findings bear on Uzbek lexicography with some force. Terminological, etymological and explanatory dictionaries cover the content vocabulary of Uzbek well. They cover the interactional vocabulary poorly, and where they cover it they supply a denotation and stop. An entry for xo‘p that gives ‘all right, agreed’ tells a learner nothing about the item’s capacity to preface a change of topic, close a sequence, or acknowledge an instruction without accepting it. The information a user needs in order to deploy xo‘p is positional and sequential, and the entry format has no slot for it.

2.2. *The individual lexicon*

That each speaker commands a lexicon of their own is not a new idea, though the label has varied. Bloch (1948) introduced idiolect for the totality of one speaker’s usage. Psycholinguistics has studied a closely related object under the name mental lexicon since the 1960s, and the literature is large: Levelt (1989) models lexical access in production, Aitchison (2012) surveys

storage and retrieval, and Jarema & Libben (2007) collect the current positions. Forensic linguistics has tested the strong version of the claim, with mixed results; Coulthard (2004) argues that idiolectal distinctiveness is real but that its evidential value depends entirely on which features are measured.

Uzbek work in this area has proceeded largely from Vygotsky (1962), whose account of inner speech and word meaning was developed for the individual lexicon by Akhutina (2003). Vygotsky was a psychologist rather than a linguist, and his interest lay in the relation between thought and word rather than in lexical inventory. That inheritance has consequences. The Uzbek discussion is strong on the cognitive status of the individual's words and weak on their distribution, and the psycholinguistic and variationist literatures that would supply the second are not usually cited. The framework below is designed to make the distributional question askable.

2.3. Group lexicons

The vocabulary shared by a professional or social group has three overlapping descriptions in the international literature, and they are not synonyms. Sociolect names a variety associated with a social group and is defined by who uses it. Register names a configuration of linguistic features associated with a situation of use and is defined by when it is used (Halliday 1978; Biber & Conrad 2019). Language for specific purposes names the vocabulary and textual conventions of a professional domain (Gotti 2003). Uzbek work tends to use *sohaleksikasi* for all three. The distinction matters for what follows. A single speaker moves between registers within one conversation without changing sociolect, and two speakers of different sociolects may share a register. Collapsing the terms makes it impossible to say either thing.

2.4. The standard variety and the national language

Milliytil and *adabiytil* are not interchangeable, though translation into English often makes them so. The literary or standard variety is codified, taught and regulated. The national language in the wider sense takes in the dialects, the colloquial varieties and the

registers that codification does not reach. Descriptions that use one English term for both generate contradictions, since the same object cannot be simultaneously free of regulation and the product of it. In what follows, standard variety refers to the codified norm and national language to the language of the speech community as a whole, dialects included.

3. *The proposed framework*

3.1. *Two dimensions*

The proposal is that lexical items be located on two dimensions that vary independently of each other.

- Dimension I is functional. It asks what an item does in an utterance.
- Dimension II is distributional. It asks which community of speakers shares it.

Neither dimension is new in itself. What is proposed here is that they be kept apart and then crossed, because the questions they answer are different and existing Uzbek descriptions run them together. A classification that sorts items into individual, group and national vocabulary answers the second question and leaves the first unanswered; a classification into parts of speech answers the first and leaves the second unanswered. Neither alone will support a contrastive description.

3.2. *Dimension I: functional class*

3.2.1. *Content categories*

Four categories, following the correlation between semantic class and propositional act set out by Croft (2001).

1. **Referring expressions** identify entities and are prototypically nominal. The class takes in common nouns, proper names, occupational and honorific appellations, and pronouns. Pronouns belong here by function but differ from the rest on two counts that matter later: they form a closed inventory, and their reference is fixed deictically or anaphorically rather than descriptively.

2. **Property-denoting expressions** attribute qualities and are prototypically adjectival. Colour, dimension, evaluation and manner belong here, together with the adverbs derived from them.
3. **Quantifying expressions** specify cardinality, order and measure. Numerals, quantifiers and the Uzbek numeral classifiers (*ta, nafar, bosh, tup*) fall in this class.
4. **Predicating expressions** assert states, processes and events, and are prototypically verbal.

The fourth category is the one absent from the tripartite division usual in Uzbek pedagogical description, where *ot*, *sifat* and *son* are grouped and the verb is handled elsewhere. A classification of the lexicon has to accommodate predicates, and treating actions as a subtype of naming does not accommodate them. *Yugurish* and *yugurmoq* differ in what they do to a proposition, not in what they are about.

3.2.2. *Interactional categories*

Five categories, defined by function in the exchange rather than by contribution to propositional content.

1. **Routine formulae** are conventionalised expressions tied to recurrent social situations: greeting, leave-taking, thanking, apologising, congratulating, condoling and blessing. Coulmas (1981) and Aijmer (1996) treat them as a class in their own right, on the ground that their value derives from the situation rather than from their parts. Uzbek is well supplied here, and many of its formulae have no lexicalised English counterpart.
2. **Connectives and discourse markers** are two classes, not one, and Uzbek description usually merges them. Connectives (*lekin, ammo, biroq, ya'ni, chunki*) link clauses within a sentence and contribute to cohesion in the sense of Halliday & Hasan (1976). Discourse markers (*mayli, xo'p, ha endi*, and *demak* in its turn-initial use) operate at the level of the turn and the sequence, marking transitions, acknowledgements and stance rather than semantic relations

between propositions (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999). The diagnostic is positional and functional. A connective can be exchanged for another connective without altering the structure of the exchange, whereas removing a discourse marker changes what the turn is doing.

3. **Interjections** express an immediate reaction and can constitute an utterance on their own: voy, obbo, eh, ie, uh. The category corresponds to undovso'zlar in Uzbek grammar. Prosodic contour is a property of interjections rather than a member of the class, and the two should not be listed side by side.
4. **Address terms and parentheticals** share a syntactic position outside the clause and are grouped here on that ground, while remaining distinct subtypes. Address terms (*undalma*) select and orient towards an addressee: domla, ustoz, and the kinship terms aka, opa, uka, singlim, amaki and xola used to non-relatives. Parentheticals (*kirishso'zlar: menimcha, afsuski, albatta, aytmoqchi*) comment on the utterance rather than contribute to it. The two orient towards different things, which is why the subtypes must be kept apart in coding even though they share a position.
5. **Modal expressions** encode the speaker's assessment of the proposition. Palmer's (2001) three-way division applies to Uzbek without strain: epistemic (*shekilli, chog'i, bo'lsakerak*), deontic (*kerak, lozim, shart, zarur*) and dynamic (*mumkin*, and the ability construction -aol-).

3.2.3. Openness and rate of change

A claim circulating in the applied literature holds that the interactional categories are closed and stable while the content categories are open and productive. The first half of the claim is right for some members and wrong for others, and the error has consequences for lexicography.

Connectives, modal auxiliaries and pronouns are closed classes in the usual sense. Their inventories are small, fixed and resistant to addition. Routine formulae are not closed. New greetings, new thanking formulae and new leave-takings enter languages regularly, and Uzbek has acquired several within

living memory. Discourse markers are not closed either. They are the site of the fastest lexical change in most languages studied for it, since items recruited into discourse-marking function undergo semantic bleaching and acquire positional freedom relative to their lexical sources (Diewald 2011). English well, like and actually are the standard cases. Their Uzbek counterparts have not been described.

The consequence runs opposite to the usual assumption. The interactional vocabulary is not stable and therefore cheap to record. It is unstable and therefore expensive, and its instability is why dictionaries lag behind it.

3.3. *Dimension II: distributional stratum*

1. **The idiolect** is the inventory available to a single speaker. It is not a subset of the standard variety, and describing it as a smaller version of the national lexicon misdescribes it twice over. A speaker's inventory contains items the standard variety does not sanction, among them regionalisms, occupational vocabulary and items from other languages; and it lacks large parts of the standard variety, since no speaker commands the whole of it. Bilingual and multilingual speakers, who form the majority in Uzbekistan, hold inventories that cross language boundaries. Code-switching is then a property of the idiolect rather than a departure from it.
2. **The sociolect** is the inventory shared by a group defined by occupation, generation, region or interest. Its distinctive content is usually located in terminology, professional collocations and conventionalised phraseology. Section 5 proposes that it is located in discourse markers as well, and offers this as a testable claim rather than an assumption.
3. **The standard variety** is the codified inventory recorded in dictionaries and taught in schools. It serves as the reference point against which the other two are described, which is a methodological role and not a claim of priority. A regional form is described as a departure from the standard because the standard is written down, not because it came second.

3.4. *The dimensions crossed*

Crossing nine functional categories with three distributional strata gives twenty-seven cells. Table 1 sets out the functional dimension with Uzbek exemplars from the standard variety. The sociolectal and idiolectal columns are deliberately left for the data to fill; specifying them in advance would be to assume what the framework is meant to test.

Table 1. *Functional categories with Uzbek exemplars from the standard variety*

Category	Function	Uzbek exemplars
Referring	Identifies entities	<i>kitob, Navoiy, domla, u</i>
Property-denoting	Attributes qualities	<i>qizil, katta, tez</i>
Quantifying	Specifies number, order, measure	<i>uch, birinchi, ko'p, -ta, nafar</i>
Predicating	Asserts states and events	<i>yo'zmoq, kelmoq, bilmoq</i>
Routine formulae	Performs a conventionalised social act	<i>assalomualaykum, rahmat, charchamang, qo'lingizgasog'lik</i>
Connectives	Links clauses; builds cohesion	<i>lekin, ammo, biroq, chunki, ya'ni</i>
Discoursemarkers	Manages turns and sequences	<i>mayli, xo'p, ha endi, demak</i>
Interjections	Expresses immediate reaction	<i>voy, obbo, eh, ie</i>
Address terms and parentheticals	Orients to addressee; comments on utterance	<i>aka, opa, domla: menimcha, afsuski, aytmoqchi</i>
Modal expressions	Encodes speaker assessment	<i>shekilli, bo'lsakerak: kerak, shart: mumkin</i>

Note: Shaded rows are the interactional categories

Two properties of the grid deserve comment. It is not a hierarchy: no cell is subordinate to any other, and the interactional categories are not a residue left over once the content categories are filled. And it is not exhaustive of everything a lexical description needs. Evaluative loading,

etymological stratum and frequency are further parameters, and Section 4.2 shows that at least one of them cuts across the grid rather than aligning with it.

4. ILLUSTRATION FROM UZBEK

The examples below establish that the categories have members in Uzbek and show what a description using them looks like. They establish nothing about frequency or distribution, and no such claim is made. Glosses follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

4.1. *Reduction across registers*

The Uzbek past perfect has a full form and at least two reduced ones.

- (1) a. *bor-gan e-di-m*
 go-PTCP COP-PST-1SG
 ‘‘I had gone’’ (standard written)
- b. *bor-gan-di-m*
 go-PTCP-PST-1SG
 ‘‘I had gone’’ (colloquial)
- c. *borvadim*
 ‘‘I had gone’’ (regional, Khorezm)

The difference between (1a) and (1b) is cliticisation of the copula onto the participle with loss of the vowel. Form (1c) is a further reduced variant current in the Khorezm region; its morphological segmentation should be established from dialect material rather than assumed, and it is cited here as a point on the cline rather than analysed.

These are not three styles of saying one thing. They are three degrees of phonological reduction correlating with mode, written against spoken, and with region. Uzbek work has sometimes labelled variation of this kind phonosemantic. That label is avoided here, because phonosemantics in the international literature refers to sound symbolism and no sound symbolism is involved.

4.2. *Stylistic synonymy and lexical strata*

Five Uzbek nouns denote the human face: *yuz*, *chehra*, *oraz*, *bashara* and *aft*. They are ordinarily presented as stylistic synonyms, which is accurate but incomplete. Two stratifications cut across each other in this set.

The items stratify etymologically, with a Turkic core (*yuz*) and Persian and Arabic accretions. They also stratify evaluatively, from strongly pejorative (*bashara*, *aft*) through neutral (*yuz*) to elevated and poetic (*chehra*, *oraz*). If the two stratifications coincided, borrowed items would be uniformly elevated. They are not. *Bashara* is of Arabic origin and is the most strongly pejorative member of the set. Borrowing raises register in some cases and lowers it in others, and the direction is not recoverable from the source language.

For the framework the point is a limiting one. All five items are referring expressions of the standard variety and therefore occupy a single cell of the grid, while differing on a parameter the grid does not encode. Evaluative loading is a third dimension. It is noted here and left aside; the Uzbek axiological literature describes it in detail.

4.3. *The interactional categories in Uzbek*

4.3.1. *Routine formulae*

Uzbek has formulae with no lexicalised English counterpart. *Charchamang*, addressed to a person at work, is formally a negative imperative and functions as an acknowledgement of effort. *Qo' lingizgasog' lik*, addressed to whoever prepared a meal, is formally a wish for the health of the addressee's hands.

- (2) *charcha-ma-ng*
get.tired-NEG-IMP.2PL
"do not get tired" (formula acknowledging work in progress)
- (3) *qo' l-ingiz-gasog' lik*
hand-2PL.POSS-DAT health
"health to your hands" (formula praising a cook)

English renders both by functional substitution rather than lexical equivalence: "keep up the good work," "that was delicious." A

translator has no item to select and must reconstruct the act. This is the basis of prediction P5 in Section 5.3.

4.3.2. *Connectives against discourse markers*

Lekin and mayli both receive concessive English glosses in dictionaries, and they behave differently. Lekin joins clauses and can be exchanged for ammo or biroq with no effect on the structure of the exchange. Mayli opens a turn, registers acceptance of a prior move and frequently precedes a shift of topic. Removing it alters what the turn does.

- (4) a. *Ertagake-l-aol-ma-y-man.*
 tomorrow come-CVB be.able-NEG-PRS-1SG
 ‘I can’t come tomorrow.’
 b. *Mayli, keyingaplash-amiz.*
 DM later talk-PRS.1PL
 ‘All right, we’ll talk later.’

Substituting lekin for mayli in (4B) does not yield a less idiomatic turn. It yields an incoherent one, because lekin has no prior clause in the same sentence to attach to. The two items are not variants of one category.

4.3.3. *Address terms*

Uzbek uses kinship terms to address non-relatives: *aka*, *opa*, *uka*, *singlim*, *amaki*, *xola*. Selection is governed by the relative age and gender of the participants rather than by kinship, and English has no counterpart system. These items illustrate a case the two dimensions are designed to handle. By form they are referring expressions; in the uses at issue they are address terms. The framework predicts that items with a use in both a content and an interactional category will be numerous, and that the two uses will be distributed differently across strata.

4.4. *What the illustrations do and do not show*

The examples above are constructed or drawn from the authors’ knowledge as native speakers of Uzbek. They demonstrate that each category is populated and that the diagnostics can be

applied. They demonstrate nothing about relative frequency, about the distribution of items across strata, or about the comparative size of the categories, and the paper makes no claim on those points. Section 5 states what would settle them.

5. OPERATIONALISING THE FRAMEWORK

5.1. *Data required*

Three bodies of data are needed, and none of them is difficult to assemble in the Khorezm region.

1. **A conversational corpus:** Fifteen to twenty hours of recorded spontaneous interaction from three occupational groups, balanced for age and gender, transcribed orthographically, with prosodic annotation for the interjection and discourse-marker categories.
2. **A diachronic comparison corpus:** Scripted dialogue from two periods, for instance Uzbek drama and film of the 1960s and 1970s set against material of the 2010s and 2020s, matched for genre and setting.
3. **A parallel corpus:** Uzbek and English fiction with translations in both directions, for the translatability prediction.

5.2. *Coding*

Each token is coded for functional category (nine values), stratum (three values) and speaker. Inter-rater agreement on functional category should be reported, since two boundaries will need explicit criteria before coding begins: the boundary between connective and discourse marker, and the boundary between interjection and routine formula. Fraser's (1999) positional and functional tests can be adapted for the first. For the second, a candidate criterion is whether the item is situation-specific in the sense of Coulmas (1981), which distinguishes a greeting from a cry of surprise.

Items with uses in more than one category, discussed in Section 6, are coded by use rather than by lemma. Each token receives one category; the lemma may appear in several.

5.3. *Predictions*

Five predictions follow from the framework. Each is stated so as to be capable of failing.

1. **P1:** Interactional inventories change faster than content inventories. In corpus (b), the turnover rate for routine formulae and discourse markers across the two periods should exceed the turnover rate for a frequency-matched sample of nouns and verbs.
2. **P2:** Idiolectal distinctiveness is concentrated in the interactional categories. In corpus (a), between-speaker variance in relative frequency should be higher for discourse markers than for frequency-matched content items.
3. **P3:** Sociolectal distinctiveness is concentrated in the content categories. The converse of P2, measured between occupational groups rather than between individuals.
4. **P4:** Functional class and stratum vary independently. With topic held constant, the distribution of items across the nine functional categories should not differ significantly between strata.
5. **P5:** Routine formulae are less translatable than content items. In corpus (c), the proportion of renderings achieved by functional substitution rather than lexical equivalence should be higher for routine formulae than for content items of comparable frequency.

5.4. *What would count against the framework*

The predictions differ in how much they carry. If P4 fails, the central claim of the paper fails with it, since the two dimensions would not be independent and one classification would do the work of two. If P2 and P3 both fail, and between-speaker and between-group variance turn out to be spread evenly across the categories, then the functional dimension adds nothing to a flat inventory and should be abandoned. Failure of P1 or of P5 on its own would require that specific claim to be withdrawn without disturbing the framework.

Stating the disconfirming observations in advance is a condition of the proposal being worth making. A classification that no observation could count against is a notation, not a hypothesis.

6. LIMITATIONS

The framework has not been tested. Nothing in this paper should be read as an empirical result, and the categories should be treated as proposals until corpus work has been done.

The examples are constructed or introspective. They show that categories are populated; they are not evidence about usage. Introspective data are known to be least reliable for exactly the items at issue here, since speakers under-report discourse markers and over-report standard forms.

Two boundaries in the functional classification are fuzzy, and some items have uses on both sides of them. Demak is a connective in one position and a discourse marker in another. Albatta is a parenthetical in one use and a modal in another. Coding by use rather than by lemma, as proposed in Section 5.2, handles the difficulty in practice but does not remove it in principle, and a lemma that appears in five categories is a sign that the categories need revision rather than that the lemma is unusual.

The framework was developed with Uzbek and English in view. Whether it transfers to languages that organise interactional material differently, for instance those with grammaticalised honorific systems, is an open question and not one this paper can settle.

7. CONCLUSION

Uzbek descriptions of the lexicon inherit a classification built for written sentences and a lexicographic practice built for content words. The items that carry the work of conversation fall outside both, scattered among residual categories that share no rationale. The framework proposed here supplies one, by separating the question of what a lexical item does from the question of who shares it and treating the answers as independent.

The proposal earns its place only if it survives testing. Section 5 states what testing would consist of and what would count against it. The material is within reach. The Khorezm region offers dialect and register variation within a short radius, and the scripted-dialogue corpora needed for the diachronic comparison exist already in published form. What remains is collection and coding.

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