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ON CERTAIN PERSIAN HOMONYMOUS WORDS IN ALISHER NAVOI'S EPIC SADDI ISKANDARIY

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the functional features of homonymous words in Alisher Navoi's epic Saddi Iskandariy. It elucidates that the extensive use of formally identical lexemes in the poet's works is closely connected with the polysemy and figurative richness characteristic of classical literature. In particular, the context-dependent expression of different semantic layers by homonymous units such as *nay*, *band*, and *dam* is demonstrated through textual examples. The study substantiates the functional role of homonyms in enhancing imagery, melodiousness, and artistic expressiveness in poetic discourse. It also provides a scholarly interpretation of the relationship between homonymous words and the rhetorical devices of *tajnis* and *iyhom*, as well as their place in the structure of poetic speech.

Keywords: Homonymy, polysemy, *tajnis*, *iyhom*, poetic discourse, semantic layer, artistic imagery.

Introduction

The works of Alisher Navoi represent a pinnacle of Turkic classical literature, in which the artistic potential of language is manifested with exceptional breadth and depth. In the poet's writings, particularly in the epic Saddi Iskandariy, the diverse use of lexical-semantic devices ensures the semantic and stylistic richness of poetic discourse. Among these devices, homonymous words occupy a special place. The polysemy, figurativeness, and imaginative thinking characteristic of

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classical poetry require that a single lexical form often express multiple semantic layers. In this regard, homonyms in Navoi's language function not merely as nominative units but as important poetic and aesthetic instruments.

The relevance of the present study lies in the fact that the functional features of Persian homonymous units in Navoi's poetics, their contextual semantics, and their artistic role have not yet been systematically and comprehensively examined. Based on the material of the epic *Saddi Iskandariy*, this study analyzes the linguopoetic and semantic-structural properties of selected Persian homonyms. The aim of the research is to identify the functional load of homonymous units in poetic text, the mechanisms through which they generate multiple semantic layers, and their role in creating artistic imagery.

Literature Review

In Uzbek linguistics, the phenomenon of homonymy and its role in artistic discourse have been addressed by various scholars. In particular, B. Bafoyev emphasizes that formally identical words occupy a quantitatively and functionally significant place in Navoi's works and demonstrates their close connection with the rhetorical devices of *tajnis* and *iyhom*. According to the scholar, homonyms in Navoi's poetics serve as one of the principal means of poetic ornamentation and artistic refinement.

Although studies devoted to the poetics of classical literature (especially those concerning *tajnis*, *iyhom*, and polysemy) acknowledge the role of homonymous units in imagery formation, the contextual-semantic analysis of Persian homonyms based specifically on the material of *Saddi Iskandariy* has not been sufficiently explored. Lexicographic sources such as ANATIL, the Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek Homonyms, and Persian-Tajik dictionaries provide extensive descriptions of lexical meanings; however, the functional activity of homonyms in poetic discourse requires a more focused linguopoetic approach.

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Therefore, the present research seeks to extend existing scholarly perspectives by elucidating the mechanisms of homonym usage specifically within poetic text.

Methodology

The methodological foundation of the study is based on the principles of modern linguistics, particularly linguopoetic, semantic-structural, and contextual analysis. The research adopts an approach that examines linguistic units within the framework of artistic text, identifies the interaction between form and meaning, and draws upon the traditions of classical poetics.

The analysis focuses primarily on the following aspects of homonymous units: their contextual meaning formation, their ability to generate multilayered semantics, their poetic and stylistic functions.

Methodologically, the research relies on the principles of descriptive and interpretative linguistics. Special emphasis is placed on examining lexical-semantic phenomena in their organic connection with the poetic system.

Research Methods

The following scientific methods were employed in the course of the study:

Contextual-semantic analysis — to determine the meanings of homonymous lexemes within the bayt and line context.

Linguopoetic analysis — to reveal the role of homonyms in enhancing imagery, musicality, and artistic expressiveness.

Comparative analysis — to compare dictionary meanings with their functional realizations in the text.

Structural (morphological) analysis — to identify the formal and grammatical characteristics of homonymous units.

Descriptive method — to systematize and generalize the observed linguistic facts.

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The combination of these methods made it possible to comprehensively illuminate the semantic range, functional load, and poetic value of Persian homonyms in the epic Saggi Iskandariy.

Alisher Navoi's works demonstrate a notably extensive use of homonymous words, which constitute a substantial portion alongside other lexical-grammatical units. The polysemy, figurativeness, and complexity of artistic thinking characteristic of classical literature necessitate the active employment of homonyms. As a result, in Navoi's language a single form often conveys multiple semantic layers, functioning as an important device that enhances the semantic coherence, artistic scope, and stylistic richness of the text. Therefore, homonyms in Navoi's lexicon occupy not only a quantitatively significant place but also play a functional role in shaping the semantic structure of poetic discourse. According to the data presented by B. Bafoyev: "In Alisher Navoi's works, both individual homonymous words and the homonymic series formed by them constitute a considerable number. Concerning the place and role of formally identical words in poetry, the poet writes in *Muhokamat ul-lug'atayn*: 'It is evident to all people of refined taste and proven among the eloquent that *tajnis* and *iyhom* are of great general significance. In these felicitous expressions and auspicious wordings and indications, there are more paronomastic words and suggestive subtleties in Turkic than in Persian, which serve as adornment and embellishment of poetry and as a source of artistic refinement'" [2: 70].

Below is presented a linguopoetic and semantic-structural analysis of several Persian homonymous words used in Navoi's epic Saggi Iskandariy. **Sarosar bu nay ichra shakkar butub, Ne shakkarki, qandi mukarrar butub** (SI: 248)

Translation: "Inside this reed, from end to end, is filled with sugar—indeed not merely sugar, but refined candy" (SI: 228).

In this couplet, the lexeme *nay* is used in the meaning of "reed." This interpretation emerges from the word's primary lexical sense. In classical Eastern literature, the word *nay* denotes not only a musical instrument but also the reed

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from which the instrument is made. In the figurative imagery of the verse, the phrase *nay ichra shakkar butub* refers to the sweet juice accumulated within the reed. Thus, the contextual use of *nay* in the meaning of “reed” strengthens the realism of the depiction.

The poet’s use of *shakkar* instead of the standard form *shakar* is primarily motivated by considerations of meter, rhythm, and musicality, ensuring the internal harmony of the couplet. In these lines, sound repetition—particularly the resonance of *k-k* and *sh-sh*—creates the internal music of the verse. The additional *k* sound in *shakkar* enhances the phonetic sonority of the line. By choosing *shakkar* rather than the ordinary *shakar*, the poet produces an effect in which the sounds seem to collide, evoking the imagined murmur of sweetness flowing within the reed. To capture this acoustic effect and enliven the internal rhythm of the *bayt*, the poet deliberately employs the modified form.

In the following quatrain, the repeated use of the lexeme *nay* further reveals its homonymous character. The word simultaneously denotes the reed and the musical instrument made from it:

Mug‘anniy,	tuzat	nay	unin	dilpazir
Ki, bas	qilg‘udek	bo‘ldi	kilkim	sarir
Ki, mast	o‘lg‘onimda	ichib	jomi	may,

Gar ul nay uni sokin o‘lsa, bu nay (SI: 446)

Prose rendering: O minstrel, play the *nay* that delights the heart; my pen has nearly ceased its writing. Now that the melody of my pen has fallen silent, let me, having drunk the cup of wine and become intoxicated, listen to the tune of this *nay* (SI, prose paraphrase, 414).

Kamand	ulki	gardung‘a	band	aylamish,
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Bu oni asiri kamand aylamish (SI: 292)

In this couplet, *band* is a Persian loanword whose lexical meanings in the verse include: “bound,” “fastened,” “blocked,” and “captured” [5:221]. The phrase *kamand... gardung‘a band aylamish* conveys the figurative sense that the

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lasso has bound even the heavens—that is, the celestial sphere itself has become subject to the lasso. Thus, *band* here denotes not merely “being tied” but also the semantic nuance of captivity and subjugation. This meaning is reinforced in the second hemistich: *Bu oni asiri kamand aylamish* (“This has made him a captive of the lasso”). Semantically, *band* is interpreted as “intentionally fastened so firmly that escape is impossible.”

According to ANATIL, the lexeme carries a wide semantic range: “knot; joint; arrest; captive; handle; grip; rope; attachment; infatuation; to fall under influence; hair, curl,” among others [1:209–210]. The Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek Homonyms lists the following meanings:

band (adj.) — occupied, not free (*Qo‘lim band* “My hand is occupied”);

band (noun) — (a) handle (*chelakning bandi*), (b) stem (*gulning bandi*), (c) a strophic unit of a poem [3:25].

Structurally (morphologically), *band* is a simple word; in the given context it precedes the verb and forms the compound verb *band aylamoq*.

Consider also the following couplet:

**Ajab yo‘qki yormoq sochar bexirad,
Kumush banddin ram qilur domu dad (SI: 98)**

In this verse: *bexirad* — “ignorant, foolish”; *band* — “bond, tie”; *ram qilur* — “flees, turns away”; *domu dad* — “trickery, deceit.” The phrase *kumush band* denotes a “silver bond,” metaphorically a tie of love and affection. The adjective *kumush* (“silver”) emphasizes the beauty and delicacy of the bond. Here *band* signifies not a physical rope but a spiritual connection—the bond of love. The collocation *kumush band* functions as an imagistic epithet that creates a poetic image.

Persian–Tajik dictionaries also note additional figurative meanings of *band*:

band shudan — to become bound, to fall in love;

band pore kardan — to break chains, to be freed from captivity;

band bar abru nehodan — to frown [5:221].

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One of the most frequent homonyms in the epic is the lexeme *dam*. The Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek Homonyms records meanings such as: “moment; air; breath; speech; sound; blacksmith’s bellows; connective (in the sense ‘now... now’); blade edge; predicative word,” etc. [3:49–50].

**Yo‘q ersa qo‘pub yong‘ilu turmag‘il,
Va gar qilsalar hibs, dam urmag‘il (SI: 273)**

In ANATIL, *dam* is glossed as: “breath; voice, sound; grief; inspiration; warm breath of the breeze; wind; blood; bellows” [1:447–448]. In this couplet, *dam* carries the meaning “breath/voice.” The phrase *dam urmoq* is a phraseological unit meaning “to utter a sound, to breathe.” Thus *dam urmag‘il* conveys the figurative meaning “do not utter a word, remain silent.” The line therefore expresses the idea: even if you are imprisoned, do not complain or protest—remain steadfast. Here *dam* metaphorically encodes speaking or voicing complaint.

In the following couplet, however, *dam* denotes the blacksmith’s bellows:

**Necha ko‘rau damni darkor etib,
Filizzotdin bir namudor etib (SI: 192)**

In other contexts, *dam* expresses the meaning of time or moment:

**O‘zungni gar o‘ltursang ul dam ne sud,
Boshing kessang ilging bilan ham ne sud (SI: 251)
Qachon vasl topsang nasib asra dam,
Agar bir dam o‘lsunki, tut mug‘tanam (SI: 355)**

These examples demonstrate the broad semantic range and context-dependent functional load of the homonymous lexeme *dam* in Navoi’s poetic discourse.

In the examples presented above, the lexeme *dam* functions as a highly frequent poetic unit that performs several stylistic roles in verse:

a) Intensification: when combined with the quantifier *har* (e.g., *har dam*), it conveys the intensity, recurrence, and inevitability of an event.

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b) Dramatic effect: the implication that something occurs “at every moment” signals that the situation is not ordinary but emotionally charged and impactful.

c) Imagery enhancement: by segmenting time into very small units, the word increases the perceived speed of poetic action and the flow of events; the reader visualizes the scene as unfolding continuously before their eyes.

d) Poetic musicality: dam is a short, rhythmically attractive, and sonorous word. Its archaic coloring further reinforces the stylistic aura of classical poetry.

In the epic, the lexeme dam also appears in reduplicative (paired) forms such as dam-badam and damo-dam. These formations express regularity, repetition, and temporal continuity of an action or state.

Boshi ustida sherpaykar alam,

Yesib anga nusrat yeli dam-badam (SI: 136)

The unit dam-badam is a reduplicative formation (dam + phonologically adapted badam). Structurally, it is a compound formed through repetition and belongs to the adverbial class. In the sentence it functions as an adverbial modifier, indicating the repeated and continuous nature of the action. Semantically, dam-badam expresses meanings such as “every moment,” “frequently,” “unceasingly,” and “continuously,” as also recorded in Yu. Rubinchik’s dictionary [4:661]. In the couplet, the phrase conveys that the wind of divine assistance (nusrat) was blowing toward him constantly and repeatedly. Thus, dam-badam denotes the uninterrupted arrival of help or divine favor.

The lexeme dam also occurs in the paired form damo-dam, which explanatory dictionaries gloss as “at every moment,” “continually,” or “repeatedly” [4:660]. In context, this reduplicative unit likewise signals frequent repetition or temporal continuity of an action.

Uzotib damo-dam adug‘a kishi,

Payopay xabar topmoq erdi ishi (SI: 127)

As a reduplicative expression, damo-dam emphasizes the continuity, rapidity, and repetition of movement. Functioning adverbially, it modifies the verb phrase

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(adug‘a “stepping forward”), yielding the sense “to keep stepping continuously and without pause.” Semantically, damo-dam conveys meanings such as “constantly,” “persistently,” and “without interruption,” thus occupying the semantic field of continuity and iterative action.

Stylistically, the word strengthens the dynamism of the verb it accompanies, highlighting the frequent and lively character of the movement while also contributing rhythm and musicality to the verse. The couplet thereby helps the reader visualize a vivid, rapidly moving figure. As a poetic device, damo-dam reinforces the hero’s activity and determination. From a functional perspective, the lexeme serves as an adverbial intensifier that specifies the temporal dimension of the action. It forms semantic links with the verbs uzotib and xabar topmoq, thereby increasing the narrative dynamism.

Persian lexicographic sources likewise note that damo-dam functions as a synonym of dam-badam, a fact illustrated through dictionary examples [4:660].

Conclusion

In the works of Alisher Navoi, homonymous words occupy not only a quantitatively significant place but also function as an important means of shaping the semantic and stylistic structure of poetic discourse. By skillfully employing formally identical units, the poet activates several layers of meaning through a single lexeme, thereby enhancing the semantic depth and artistic expressiveness of the text. Lexemes such as nay, band, and dam convey different meanings depending on the context, at times acquiring literal, figurative, or phraseological senses. In particular, nay is used in the meanings of “reed” and “musical instrument,” band in the senses of “connection,” “captivity,” and “bond,” while dam appears across various semantic dimensions such as “breath,” “voice,” “time,” and “instrument,” thereby intensifying imagery and dramatic effect. Furthermore, reduplicative forms such as dam-badam and damo-dam

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express continuity and repetitiveness of action, contributing to the poem's internal rhythm and euphony.

Thus, in Navoi's language, homonyms are not merely a phenomenon of formal similarity but serve as a functional device that expands semantic scope, deepens artistic imagery, and elevates poetic artistry.

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