

Lexical-Semantic Features Of The Epic “Balogardon”

Umaraliyeva Iroda

Independent researcher at JSPU, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article presents a lexical-semantic analysis of the epic “Balogardon,” recorded from one of the major representatives of Uzbek oral literature, Fozil Yoʻldosh oʻgʻli. It elucidates the semantic layers of the words and expressions used in the work and their role in conveying the people’s worldview and values. The epic’s lexicon features ancient Turkic words, dialectal units, artistic (stylistic) devices, and an active presence of synonymic and antonymic layers. The diversity of terminological vocabulary also helps enhance the epic’s lexical value. In the epic, semantics serves to highlight the central idea—defending the people, heroism and devotion; to uncover the essence of symbolic images; to reflect the people’s historical and cultural values; to shape the reader’s moral-aesthetic education; and to aid in understanding the historical and cultural context. Furthermore, semantic analysis reveals the richness of the system of images and its organic connection with the people’s mentality. The results of the study contribute to a deeper exploration of the epic’s language and to understanding the spiritual world of the people through linguistic means.

Keywords: The epic “Balogardon,” lexicon, oral folk literature, system of images, synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, semantics, symbolic meaning, multidimensionality of semantic layers.

Introduction: Thanks to its rich spiritual and cultural heritage, the Uzbek people are recognized by the international community. The main reason for this is the attention and investments directed precisely to this sphere by our Head of State. In particular, with the aim of widely promoting samples of folk oral creativity and instilling them in the consciousness of the younger generation, the III International Bakhshi Festival was organized in our country on May 6–8, 2023. At the solemn ceremony dedicated to the opening of the festival, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, delivered the following remarks: “Preserving and developing our incomparable spiritual wealth—classical art and the rare examples of folk creativity—and conveying it intact to future generations is the noble duty of forward-thinking scholars and artists, statesmen and public figures, and all people of culture around the world.”[1]

METHOD

Folk epics have been studied by scholars for many years. In his research, A. Rahimov addresses the characteristics of the lexicon of folk epics.[2] In particular, G. U. Jumanazarova’s scholarly work

emphasizes the features of the epics of Fozil Yoʻldosh oʻgʻli.[3] The epic “Balogardon” is also considered an invaluable heritage of Uzbek oral folk creativity. This epic glorifies such exalted human qualities as heroism, courage, loyalty, and patriotism. At the same time, the “Balogardon” epics are an important source that showcases the lexical and semantic richness of the Uzbek language. A lexical-semantic analysis of the epic’s text is of great importance for a deeper understanding of its artistic content and for researching the history of language and culture.

Lexicon is the vocabulary of a language, that is, the totality of all words and expressions existing in a particular language. Lexicon is one of the main layers of language, through which a society’s culture, historical development, worldview, and social life are reflected.[4] In the “Balogardon” epic, too, the diversity of the lexical layer is observed. In particular, archaic and historical lexis has helped enhance the linguistic appeal of the epic. The epic contains many archaic words and historical terms. These words indicate the time of the epic’s creation and its historical context and confirm that it originates from folk oral creativity. For example,

words such as “xon” (khan), “bek” (bey), “o’dag’a,” “jig’ador,” “sardor” (commander), “otliq” (cavalryman), “piyoda” (infantryman), and “qo’biz” (a bowed instrument) reflect the social structure of that period. As Karimov notes, “these lexical units give the text of the epic a historically realistic color and awaken in the reader the spirit of that era.”[5] In addition, archaic words also actively participate in enhancing the structure and linguistic value of the epic. In it, the word “sino-son” means “calm, peaceful,” the word “ko’toxlik” means “shortcoming,” the word “bel” means “gorge/valley,” and the word “durunki” means “melody, caprice.” These words, with their meanings preserved though their forms changed, are still widely used today.

A large part of the epic’s language is close to the vernacular, with many words related to everyday life widely used. This brings out the lexicon of ordinary people. For example, words related to nature, animals, labor, and household items—“qush” (bird), “ot” (horse), “egar” (saddle), “kaptar” (pigeon), “dala” (field), “jilov” (bridle), “tog” (mountain), “ketmon” (hoe)—make the epic familiar and understandable to listeners. As a fragment taken from the life of the people, it awakens familiar and warm feelings in the reader’s heart. In the epic, the social life of that time, people’s way of life, and natural landscapes are depicted clearly and engagingly. This further enhances the aesthetic pleasure of the work. “The ‘Balogardon’ epics bring to life the Uzbek people’s life experience through words and, through them, create scenes of everyday life in the past.”[6]

Synonymic layers are also frequent in the “Balogardon” epic. For example, words like “to’ra,” “bek,” “o’dag’a” share one meaning, that is, “a person belonging to the upper class”; and “mamlakat,” “yurt,” “davlat,” “podshohlik” convey the meaning of “a certain territory (realm),” forming synonymy and contributing to the artistic color of the text. In addition, antonymic words serve to show oppositions and conflict in the epic, which deepens its content. For example, antonyms such as mard–nomard (brave–coward), qutilmoq–tutilmoq (to be saved–to be captured), o’lmoq–omon qolmoq (to die–to survive), kun–tun (day–night), baland–past (high–low), and so on occur.

Artistic devices are widely employed in “Balogardon.” Tashkentov notes that “metaphor and comparison enliven the epic’s images and strengthen their meaning.”[7] For example, the metaphor “tulki, shaqal kular mening holima” (“the fox and the jackal laugh at my condition”) expresses the hero’s dire, helpless state. In the sentence “Bo’taday bo’zlab” (“weeping like a bo’ta”), a type of semantic shift—metaphor (i.e., istiora)—is involved. In the sentence, bo’ta denotes a

weak, helpless, solitary young animal. Bo’zlab denotes the state of crying, lamenting. “Bo’taday bo’zlab”—this phrase is used to describe a person’s condition, and by comparing it to a bo’ta, the state is intensified. Here the person’s condition is likened to that of a bo’ta, that is, there is a direct, unmarked comparison. This is an istiora, that is, a metaphor.

Many war scenes, religious views, and traditional ways of life are reflected in the “Balogardon” epic. These aspects necessitate the rich use of terminological vocabulary within the epic. Military, religious, geographical, ethical-ethnographic, and socio-legal terms are used. The events speak often of battle and weapons. Words such as tulpor (swift steed), urush (war), xanjar (dagger), dushman (enemy), qamal (siege), yov (foe), qalqon (shield), zindon (dungeon), qilich (sword), qal’a (fortress) form the group of military terms. For example:

Ul-dushmanlar, yobir-yosir bo’libdi,

O’lja qilib ko’p dunyoni olibdi.[8]

The epic is imbued with religious beliefs; therefore, many religious terms appear: ajal (death), Xizr, xudo (God), imon (faith), chilton, duo (prayer), taqdir (destiny), qiyomat (Judgment Day). In the following lines, the epic’s religious views are beautifully expressed:

Oriyat aylading Avazday shunqor,

Madad qilsin senga imon, chiltonlar.[8]

Ethical-ethnographic terms help the listener of the epic sense the social life and customs of the people of that time. Terms such as to’y-tomosha (wedding festivities), kuyov (groom), fотиha (betrothal blessing) pertain to folk customs. Socio-legal terms—podsho (king), o’dag’a, xon (khan), bek, to’ra, hukm (decree/judgment), adolat (justice)—relate to the social status of the epic’s characters or to the system of governance. The apt use of geographic terms also enhances the appeal of environmental and nature descriptions. Place names and natural-geographic terms occur in the work—Bog’i Eram (Garden of Iram), Chambil, Balo Mountain, ancient cities, steppe, mountain, desert. For example, the indication of a specific place name in the following couplet gives the epic a realistic spirit and makes it more convincing:

Ajoyib, g’aroyib Eramning bog’i,

Bu guliston parilarning chorbog’i. [8]

All of the above types of terms ensure the stylistic richness of the epic, serving not only to strengthen the image of the hero but also to fulfill didactic aims. Through religious and moral terms, educational ideas are advanced.

The semantic features of the “Balogardon” epic are also diverse. “Semantics is one of the main fields of linguistics, in which each concept is studied in a distinctive manner and divided into semantic fields.” [9] In the epic, aspects such as imagery, moral-ethical semantics, historical and cultural semantics, and linguistic semantics—lexicon, expressions—as well as ideological semantics are manifested. One of the important features of folk epics is the expression of strong symbolic meaning. Imagery is the heart of epics. It makes the epic vivid, affecting, and memorable. Through images, not only events but also the people’s aspirations, beliefs, and moral views are reflected. Every hero and event in the work embodies symbolic meaning and serves to cultivate moral-ethical qualities in the public consciousness. For example, in the work Avazxon is regarded as the embodiment of courage, bravery, and justice, while the sorceress old woman represents vices such as wickedness and cunning. The horse G’irko’k also has special significance in the epic; it is considered a symbol of the people’s hopes and dreams. Therefore, the horse is portrayed as perfect in every respect, able to come through any situation safely. The importance of imagery in the epic is immense; it elevates the artistic value of the work and exerts a powerful impact on the reader or listener.

Moral-ethical semantics plays an active role in enhancing the artistic value of the “Balogardon” epic. Values such as mutual respect, honesty, ardor, and devotion among its heroes are highly esteemed. The heroes’ struggle against evil and their defense of the people reflect key aspects of the epic’s moral-ethical semantics. The main hero of the epic, Avazxon, setting out on a perilous path even without a mount for the honor and dignity of Go’ro’gli, expresses the lofty value in father–child relations. The fairy Oga Yunus and the Misqol fairies, upon hearing of Go’ro’gli’s death, traverse a very great distance to arrive, showing how high a wife’s respect for her husband should be. There are many such episodes that help cultivate exalted moral qualities in the public mind. The main aim of the work is precisely to broaden the people’s worldview, to call for love of the Motherland and mutual solidarity. The elements of historical-cultural semantics in the epic also serve to realize this aim. The people’s historical and cultural customs are manifested in the heroes’ attire, speech, and comportment. In particular, head covering (a woman’s scarf is considered a symbol of modesty), military duty, and hospitality are clearly evident. For example, the following actions of Avazxon in the epic are a manifestation of hospitality: “Avaz prepared his father, emerged from the cave of Tavakkal, came to the court as if he had seen nothing, laid fine rugs, and set the table.” Here it is reflected

how our people deem the best things worthy for guests and how greatly they honor them. It is no coincidence that our people say the proverb, “A guest is as great as your father.”

The words (lexical units), expressions, folk proverbs, and phraseological units used in the epic possess semantic force. This brings linguistic semantics to the fore. Likewise, the word “balogardon” itself has a symbolic meaning—a rescuer, one who finds refuge from calamities, a helper. Synonyms of words and antonymic semantic relations are also used; the phrase “balogardon bo’lmoq” encompasses meanings such as being a protector, being devoted, and withstanding hardships. Folk proverbs are also widely employed in the epic. For example: “Esing borida etagingni yop” (“Cover your hem while you are in your right mind”), “Tuzamoq yagona odamning qo’lidan keladi, buzmoq har qanday odamning qo’lidan keladi” (“Mending is within the power of a single person; breaking is within the power of anyone”), “Tavakkalchining ishini oblo bitirar” (“The venture of the risk-taker turns out well”), “Mehr ikki ko’zda” (“Affection is in two eyes”). These proverbs serve to increase the work’s impact and to enliven the reader’s emotions.

Ideological semantics

The general idea of the epic is usually justice, the right path, defense of the people, compassion and mercy. Especially in the images of the king and the leader, the people’s needs and the struggle for the true path are manifested. The role of ideological semantics in folk epics is very important and profound, because epics are oral artistic works that embody the people’s worldview, dreams, values, historical memory, and moral norms. The place of ideological semantics in the epic is as follows:

1. A means of illuminating the main ideas. There is always one main idea in epics: for example, patriotism, justice, bravery, loyalty, love, freedom, and others. Ideological semantics reveals these ideas—it analyzes what meaning is given through the actions of the heroes, symbols, and events. Example: in the “Balogardon” epic, the main idea is the defense of the people, bravery, and devotion. Through the actions and adventures of the image of Avazxon, this idea is expressed deeply.
2. It reveals hidden meanings through symbols. In epics there are often symbolic expressions. Ideological semantics helps to understand the inner, hidden meaning of these symbols. In the “Balogardon” epic, Avazxon is considered the embodiment of courage, bravery, and justice, while the sorceress old woman represents vices such as wickedness and cunning. The horse G’irko’k also has special significance in the epic.

It is regarded as a symbol of the people's hopes and aspirations. Therefore, the horse is depicted as perfect in every respect, capable of emerging safe and sound from any situation.

3. It reflects the people's spiritual-moral values. Through ideological semantics we see which noble qualities the people have exalted in the epics: honesty, respect for elders, fighting for the Motherland, hospitality.

4. It helps to understand the historical and cultural context. The "Balogardon" epic is valuable not only as an artistic work, but also as a historical document. Through ideological semantic analysis, a deeper understanding is formed of the people's life, values, and social struggles of that time.

5. It forms moral-aesthetic upbringing in the reader. The "Balogardon" epic was written not only for entertainment, but also for educational purposes. Ideological semantics reveals these educational aspects. Ideological semantics serves as a key to understanding the deep meaning of folk epics. Through the symbols, images, and events in the epics, it reveals the people's ideas and values and helps to understand the spiritual-aesthetic and educational significance of the epic. The main idea of this epic is the victory of justice over evil. It calls readers to goodness.

CONCLUSION

"Among the genres of folk oral literature, the study of the language of epics—which stand out for the breadth with which they reflect national customs and for their linguistic appeal—is one of the most important issues in determining the national-linguistic distinctiveness of knowing the world." [10]

The lexical-semantic features of the epic "Balogardon" likewise reflect the richness of folk oral creativity and the historical and cultural roots of the work's language. The epic's lexical wealth is manifested in the harmony of historical, archaic, synonymic, metaphoric, and terminological words. Encountering them in the work allows us to grasp the linguistic significance of this epic. The multidimensionality of the semantic layers increases its artistic power and further deepens the content of the epic. In it, semantics serves as a means of illuminating the main ideas, understanding the essence of symbolic images, reflecting spiritual-moral values, and shaping the reader's moral-aesthetic upbringing. At the core of this epic lie noble qualities such as patriotism, selflessness, bravery, and courage. Popularizing the reading of the epic awakens in the hearts of the younger generation feelings such as respect for historical traditions, love for the Motherland, and striving for goodness. For this reason, the study of the "Balogardon" epics is of great

importance not only for linguistics but also for cultural studies.

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