

The Expression And Development Of Discourse Markers In Modern Uzbek Poetry

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Received: 31 August 2025; **Accepted:** 26 September 2025; **Published:** 31 October 2025

Abstract: This article analyzes the linguopoetic nature of discourse markers in modern Uzbek poetry, their communicative-pragmatic functions, and their stylistic role in the structure of poetic texts. Through the use of discourse units such as "xullas" (in short), "aslida" (in fact), "yana" (again), "go'yo" (as if), "demak" (therefore), "nahotki" (could it be that), and others, the study explores how poets express internal logical coherence, subjective attitudes, and the distinctiveness of poetic discourse.

Keywords: Discourse marker, modern pragmalinguistics, interactive sociolinguistics, conjunctions and parenthetical words, interjections and emotional exclamations.

Introduction: The concept of discourse markers includes a variety of linguistic units: conjunctions and prepositions, modal and emotional particles, interjections, parenthetical words (parenthetical expressions), and others. In poetic texts, these elements perform not only grammatical but also stylistic-pragmatic functions: through them, the poet conveys tone, attitude, or address, giving the poetic discourse a conversational character. Below, we examine the main types of such markers and their poetic manifestations.

In poetry, as in prose, connecting, introductory, and conclusive words are actively used to link the flow of ideas throughout the text or to signal a new conclusion or a shift in topic. These include units such as lekin, ammo ("but," expressing contrast), chunki, sababi ("because," giving reason or explanation), demak ("thus," drawing a conclusion), xulosa / xullas ("in short," "in conclusion"), and darvoqe ("by the way," marking a digression or thematic transition). In traditional poetry, such words usually served fixed grammatical functions—as connectors within a line—whereas in modern poetry, they have acquired an independent discursive function. That is, the poet uses these words to evaluate their own thoughts, direct the reader's attention to a particular point, or change the tone in a conversational manner.

For example, the word xullas ("in short," "after all") typically signifies the conclusion of a statement or reflection. In modern poetry, xullas often appears suddenly, bringing the preceding lines to a final point or introducing a sharp emotional or semantic turn. Consider the following lines by Matnazar Abdulhakim:

"...Perhaps what I called honey was poison,
What I called nectar, perhaps, was bitter sap.
In short (Xullas), you know best, mother.

You, the wise one, aware of a thousand secrets..."

In this excerpt, the lyrical persona begins with hesitation ("perhaps"), reflecting on life's path and expressing ironic contrasts ("what I called honey turned out to be poison"). Then, with the sudden insertion of xullas, the speaker moves to closure, turning to his mother and leaving the final judgment to her: "In short, you know best, mother." Here, xullas functions not merely as a word of conclusion but as a discourse marker that encapsulates the preceding emotions and reflections—conveying the meaning "after all, it's up to you." This example shows how in modern Uzbek poetry xullas has moved away from a formal tone to acquire a more intimate, conversational flavor.

Similarly, the word darvoqe ("by the way") serves in poetic speech to signal a reminder or a transition to a new thought. In earlier poetry, this word was almost

never used, but contemporary poets employ darvoqe to create the impression of recalling something mid-conversation and adding it naturally. For example, in one poem:

“...by the way (darvoqe), I should first put my thoughts in order,

and then my dreams.”

This line is taken from the inner monologue of the lyrical persona: while speaking on one topic, the speaker suddenly interrupts themselves with “darvoqe” (“by the way”)—as if reminding themselves of something. As a result, a stylistic effect emerges that brings into the text the spirit of an inner dialogue (self-communicative discourse). Such parenthetical elements give the poem a tone of address—either to an interlocutor or to oneself.

Linguist M. Rahmatov, in his study of Alisher Navoi’s ghazals, notes that vocatives and parenthetical words in poetic discourse undergo semantic transformation and acquire new functions beyond their initial lexical meaning (tsuull.uz). In particular, analyzing the interjection “Ey” (“O”), he shows that in expressions like “ey do’st” (“O friend”), the word functions not as a mere call but as an expressive and figurative means of address.

Thus, in modern poetic texts as well, parenthetical words and connective elements not only link ideas but also serve to express the author’s stance. If we focus specifically on the word “demak” (“so,” “therefore”), it was also used in classical literature to express conclusions (for example, “demak, xulosa shuki...” — “therefore, the conclusion is...”). However, modern poets often use “demak” in a simpler, more conversational tone. Ulug’bek Hamdam, in one of his analytical essays, describes this tendency with sensitivity: “So, why did it happen this way? The reason is...”—and then proceeds to explain the cause.

In his critical prose, words like “xo’sh” (“well then”) and “sababi” (“the reason is”) are presented exactly as in live conversation. The same style can be seen in poetry, where the poet sometimes “talks” to the reader in a dialogic, question-and-answer manner, using expressions such as “xo’sh”, “yaxshi” (“well”), and “demak”. In such cases, the word “demak” appears in a poetic line to signal a logical conclusion or a sudden shift—and sometimes even conveys irony or sarcasm.

For example, in one quatrain:

“Life — a snowdrop breaking through winter,

Life — the breath of spring, so (demak),

So (demak), life is but a minute —

It passes in the blink of an eye, know that.”

Here, “demak” is used twice in succession: the first introduces a metaphorical image, while the second abruptly leads to a simple, direct conclusion (“life is but a minute”). The placement of one “demak” mid-line and another at the beginning of the next line creates a rhythmic pause—an effect of reflection followed by realization.

Evidently, as a discourse marker, “demak” in this context draws the reader’s attention to the logical culmination of the thought and articulates the final point of the poetic image.

Interjections and Emotional Markers

It is well known that poetry is the art of expressing emotions. In a literary text, the poet conveys their emotional state in many ways—through imagery, metaphors, rhythm, and meter. Among these means, interjections and emotive discourse markers hold a special place. Words such as “Oh,” “Vo(h),” “Ey,” “Ha,” “Yo rabbim” (“Oh my Lord”) not only enrich the content of a poem but also reveal its spiritual tone.

For example, in romantic or tragic poetry, the frequently encountered “oh” is not merely a breath or a pause left between lines; it is a signal of deep inner feeling. The reader subconsciously senses this signal and feels the emotional rhythm of the poem. Dilfuza Abdumalikova, in her research, treats exclamatory sentences as a distinct pragmatic phenomenon, emphasizing that “Exclamatory sentences in communication serve as indicators of emotion, intonation, and attitude—through them, the speaker expresses feelings and personal stance.” Indeed, when words like “Oh” or “Voy” appear in a poem, the reader instinctively reads the line with heightened tone and emotion. Thus, interjections give a poem intonational structure, elevating it emotionally—much like a musical melody.

In classical Uzbek poetry, interjections were used relatively rarely (for instance, “vo ajab” — “oh, wonder”). However, vocative forms were common in classical ghazals: “Ey dil” (“O heart”), “Ey do’st” (“O friend”), “Ey falak” (“O sky”), and others. These too begin with interjections and serve as calls or addresses. In poetic discourse, they create elements of dialogue: the poet alternately calls out to the heart, the beloved, or the heavens.

In modern poetry, this tradition has expanded further—the poet now often conducts an inner dialogue within their own consciousness or directly addresses the reader. M. Rahmatov, who has specifically studied the interjection “Ey”, concludes that the word “Ey” in poetry eliminates the distance between the poet and the object of address, enlivening the imagery through its use.

For example, in the line “Ey, ko’klamning birinchi yomg’irl!” (“O, the first rain of spring!”), the poet directly addresses the rain. This is, of course, an instance of personification, but at the same time, it gives the poem a dialogic tone. When reading such a line, the reader imagines the poet as if calling out on stage—creating the sense of a real, living dialogue.

In modern poetry, alongside “Ey,” interjections such as “Oh,” “Voy,” “Eh” frequently appear. Sometimes these occur as separate lines or at the beginning of a phrase, serving as expressive pauses within the poem. For example:

“Oh, the burning pains in my chest,
The fragments of a torn heart.
Eh, my soul, why do you deceive—
Your hopes are false, unworthy...”

In this passage, two different interjections are used: “Oh,” and “Eh.” The interjection “Oh,” placed at the beginning of the first line, conveys pain and sorrow, while “Eh,” at the beginning of the third line, expresses disappointment and regret. If these interjections were removed, the poem would remain grammatically correct, but its emotional intensity would diminish considerably. Thus, interjections serve as the emotional “signs” or discourse markers of the poem, revealing the underlying emotional temperature of the poetic discourse.

Dilfuza Abdumalikova, in her study “The Discursive Marker Features of Exclamatory Sentences,” notes that exclamatory expressions in communication perform such functions as attracting attention, conveying strong emotion, and dividing speech into logical segments. These functions are equally characteristic of poetic communication. Especially in dramatic lyric genres (for instance, poems or epics in the form of dramatic monologues), interjections create a stage-like dialogic tone.

At the same time, in lyrical poetry, words such as “Oh” and “Voy” (“Alas”) express the inner cry of the lyrical hero, directly affecting the reader and stirring their own emotions. The word “Axir” (“After all” / “Indeed”) also deserves mention, as it is used to convey insistence, reproach, or sorrow. The examples above show how powerful “Axir” can be. For instance, in the lines “Men axir insonman” (“After all, I am human”) or “Axir, men – kafanga o’ralgan bir his, Axir men – osmonga yetmagan ovoz” (“After all, I am a feeling wrapped in a shroud, after all, I am a voice that has not reached the sky”) from a poem by Odil Ikrom, the repetition of “Axir” adds rhythm and pressure to the tone, emphasizing the hero’s deep anguish and the attempt to explain an existential truth.

(uzbekliterature.uz)

Consider the following excerpt:

“After all (Axir) I am a feeling wrapped in a shroud,
Dust entwined in the whites of your eyes.
After all, I am the sky that lived upon the earth,
After all, the truth of this world is falsehood,
After all, the falsehood of this world is truth...”

In these lines, the poet Odil Ikrom repeats the word “axir” (“after all”) several times, presenting a philosophical conclusion to his emotional reflections. Each time “axir” appears, it reaffirms and strengthens the meaning of the statement that follows — as if we hear echoes of thoughts like: “after all, I am such a person,” or “after all, this world is nothing but illusion.” This technique — the repetition of a single discourse marker across several lines — harmonizes with the art of anaphora in poetic speech, giving the text rhythmic and semantic unity. From a discursive perspective, the poet turns to “axir” each time to justify his reasoning, as though insisting on the truth of his own words. As a result, the reader, too, becomes inclined to accept the poetic truth the poet asserts.

In conclusion, interjections and emotionally charged discourse markers have become an inseparable part of the language of modern poetry. If in Alisher Navoi’s lyrical tradition the dominant poetic technique was to address entities like “Ey sabo” (“O breeze!”), as a conventional motif, in contemporary poetry the poet can cry out “oh” or “ey” at any moment — and this is perceived naturally. This shift is undoubtedly the outcome of the liberalization and vitalization of poetic language.

The examples and analyses discussed above demonstrate that discourse markers have become essential expressive tools of modern Uzbek poetry. Within poetic structure, they serve various functions and reflect key tendencies in the evolution of poetic discourse. To summarize their developmental characteristics:

First, the frequency of discourse markers in modern poetry has increased. If we analyze classical and Soviet-era poetry, we notice that colloquial elements such as “-ku,” “-da,” “xullas,” and others appeared infrequently — often in a formal style or not at all. However, in the poetry of the independence period and today, such elements occur much more often. As literary scholar Ulug’bek Hamdam notes, contemporary poetry “is not a mushroom that sprang up overnight, but an organic part of a centuries-long process of transformation.” Yet within this continuity, new tendencies have clearly emerged — one of which is the syncretism of speech-like expressions in poetic language. (uzbekliterature.uz)

Discourse markers are one manifestation of this syncretism: in poetic language, elements of the literary register now blend with those of the spoken vernacular.

Secondly, discourse markers have changed the very “voice” of poetry. Whereas poems were once perceived as written texts, many contemporary works now give the impression of spoken or heard speech. In other words, poets are adopting a style as if conversing directly with the reader. In this trend, discourse markers—especially those that carry a conversational tone such as “xo’sh” (“well”), “mana” (“here”), “xullas” (“in short”), “axir” (“after all”), and “ku”—play a central role.

For example, when we read poems by Erkin Vohidov or Abdulla Oripov, we almost hear their voices:

“Stop, sea, stop, don’t surge!” (E. Vohidov)

—here the repetition of “stop” gives the line the quality of an oral utterance.

Or: “Forgive me, my mother tongue” (A. Oripov)

—this sounds at once like a monologue and like someone’s reply or prayer.

Thus, discourse markers contribute to the revival and dramatization of the poetic voice.

Thirdly, by using discourse markers, poets enrich and individualize their personal styles. Each poet’s language is unique: some write in long, complex sentences, while others favor simplicity close to the spoken idiom. Discourse markers—particularly particles and interjections—accentuate these stylistic distinctions. For instance, in Rahmat Bobojon’s poems, the particle “-ku” appears frequently, lending his style a tone of sincerity. Similarly, Halima Khudoyberdiyeva often begins her poems with interjections like “Eh, olis yillar...” (“Ah, distant years...”), a hallmark of her lyrical voice. Hence, discourse elements have become integral components of individual poetic style, reflecting the diversity and evolving richness of Uzbek poetic expression.

Fourthly, the development of discourse markers has enhanced the communicative effectiveness of poetic speech. Poetry must move the reader and awaken emotional resonance. Modern poets pursue this through various means, one of the most important being the creation of a direct sense of dialogue with the reader. Discourse markers are the linguistic tools that generate precisely this feeling. When reading dialogic or conversational poems, the reader unconsciously joins the speaker’s thought process, internally answering their questions. In many of the examples analyzed in this article, we observe this effect: when the line says “Sen menden ketding-ku axir?” (“You left

me, didn’t you, after all?”), the reader silently repeats the question; when seeing “Xo’sh, nega bunday bo’ldi?” (“Well then, why did it happen this way?”), they too begin to ponder the cause. Thus, the poetic text takes on an interactive character. From this perspective, the use of discourse markers is transforming poetry into a more interactive genre.

This process aligns theoretically with Sherli Safarov’s principle of “studying language as a communicative phenomenon” — that is, poetic language should be perceived and studied not only as a written text but also as a form of dialogue and communication.

Fifthly, the growing use of discourse markers in poetic speech has also provoked some critical debate. Some critics argue that poetry, being a sacred art, risks losing its refinement if it becomes too simple or overly infused with everyday elements. For example, Ulug’bek Hamdam observes that in the lyric poetry of the independence period, intimate emotions sometimes become excessively personal, failing to resonate with a broader audience. However, he also notes that this is a one-sided phenomenon and that many poets’ works radiate a healthy, life-affirming spirit.

Thus, moderation is essential: discourse markers are effective only when they naturally blend with the poem’s content and enliven its tone. If overused, they may push the poem too far toward colloquial style and diminish its artistic value. Yet, for now, no such risk is evident in Uzbek poetry—on the contrary, the new generation of poets employs these tools with refined taste and precision, enriching contemporary poetic speech with fresh shades of expression.

Discourse markers have taken shape and developed in contemporary Uzbek poetry as important stylistic and pragmatic devices. Their use has brought several major changes to poetic expression:

Revitalization of the poetic language. Discourse markers (in particular -ku, xullas, axir, ey, and others) introduce the tone of live, spoken conversation into poetic speech, narrowing the distance between poem and reader. When we read today’s poems, we often feel as if we are in direct dialogue with the poet. This effect is undoubtedly achieved through discourse elements.

Heightened emotional impact. Markers such as interjections and modal particles make it possible to convey feelings directly. With their help, the poet more openly expresses wonder, pain, irony, or a sense of solidarity. As a result, the effect on the reader increases and the poem’s emotional resonance grows stronger.

Structuring the poetic text. Certain discourse markers (for example, demak, darvoqe, xullas) function as

signals that organize a poem's internal structure. By dividing the poem into logical segments, shifting to conclusions, or introducing new images, they make the overall text easier to understand. In this sense, they have become elements of textual coherence.

Expression of individuality. Discourse elements manifest differently in each poet's style, sharpening their individual tone. One poet may use axir frequently to create an insistent tone; another adds sincerity with -ku; still another pours out feeling with oh and voh. In this way, discourse markers have become integral to a poet's style and serve stylistic differentiation in poetry.

Development of the poetic language. Overall, the active use of discourse markers is a sign of the natural evolution of the Uzbek poetic language. Language changes over time, and so does the language of poetry. Today's poets, in line with the spirit of the age and readers' tastes, are trying out new stylistic means. Discourse markers are precisely such means: their entry into and development within poetry show the integration of a "conversational element" into artistic language. Analyses confirm that this process is proceeding successfully and that our poetic language is becoming richer.

Alongside the points above, it should also be noted that discourse markers are not foreign, artificially added elements in poetry; rather, they are an inseparable part arising from the inner logic and emotive demands of the work. They help convey the poet's intention through subtle shades and tones. For this reason, it is difficult to imagine today's Uzbek poetry without discourse markers: though small words, they carry a heavy artistic load. This process has not gone unnoticed in scholarly literature either.

This shows that the place and significance of discourse markers in contemporary Uzbek poetry are being recognized scientifically and are taking shape as a theoretical concept. In conclusion, the expression and development of discourse markers have become one of the key factors defining the stylistic profile of modern Uzbek poetry. They breathe the air of lively conversation into our poetic speech, making poetry more popular in the best sense—closer to the people—while also aligning it with contemporary tastes. Through skillful use of these devices, poets are able to convey their creative intent more fully. It is beyond doubt that discourse markers will continue to maintain their place in the field of poetic experimentation and spur new artistic discoveries. After all, language is a process in constant motion, and the language of poetry is the most delicate and responsive part of that process. Discourse markers express precisely this living, dynamic layer of language.

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