

# The Backbone Of The Language

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**Abstract:** The Uzbek language is an objective image – both internal and external – that fully reflects the character and appearance of the Uzbek people, their world of thought and imagination, their past and present; importantly, this image is “drawn” by the language itself, through its own means and, as it were, by its “own hand.” The article discusses how this image has manifested itself throughout the processes of our people’s millennia-long linguistic and historical development, as well as in their unique cultural and intellectual, literary and artistic treasures.

**Keywords:** Word, language, spine, foundation, dictionary, world, civilization, nation, national spirit.

**Introduction:** Humanity’s comprehension of the world and its union with the lofty heights called civilization rests on the undeniable truth that language possesses an incomparable power beyond all measure. On this matter, wise and thinkers of different eras have expressed many sound, precise, and profound ideas in beautiful and eloquent forms. There is a well-known edification by our venerable ancestor Alisher Navoi, the sultan of the realm of Turkic words and a great thinker, which reads: “Speech set humankind apart from animals, for there is no jewel more noble than it.” In this saying, the absolute truth finds its clear and precise expression: that word and language possess an immensely great power capable of elevating human beings to a rank entirely distinct from all other living creatures. Another boundless and magnificent power of this absolutely unique blessing lies in the fact that it has united people as a single community, illuminated the birth of the unique concept called a nation, and served as the foundation and underpinning for the integrity of the great unity known as a people.

Therefore, at no time can the concepts of language, nation, and people ever be conceived separately from one another.

One of the brightest representatives of the Jadid movement, Abdullah Avloni, emphasized the following truthful words with great pain in his work “Turkish Gulistan or Morality”: “The mirror of life that shows the existence of every nation in the world is its language and literature. To lose the national language is to lose the spirit of the nation.” It is absolutely evident that

without language, the essence of such an exceptionally profound and lofty concept as the national spirit becomes completely suspended and hollow. Thus, concepts such as national spirit, national consciousness, national spirituality, and national culture all rest upon one fundamental pillar and living support the mother tongue. The eminent Uzbek linguist, Academician Alibek Rustamov, described this reality through a beautiful and polished analogy as follows: “Just as air is indispensable for the life of a living being, so too is the word (that is, language) indispensable for a person’s life as a human being and for the spiritual vitality that defines one’s humanity.” According to the views of the renowned German scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt and his followers, language is not merely a means of communication between people; rather, it is a nation’s eye through which it sees the world, its ear with which it hears, and its mind with which it understands. Every people have a national way of seeing the world that differs from others, and speakers of each language perceive the same sounds differently. For example, an Uzbek hears a dog’s sound as “vov-vov,” while a Russian hears it as “gaf-gaf,” and so on. Differences in patterns of perception cannot be overlooked either. For example, translating the Russian expression *не даёт говорить* (doesn’t let talk) into Uzbek as *gapishtga bermayapti* (doesn’t give me talk) is the result of an inappropriate transfer of the Russian perceptual pattern into Uzbek; in accordance with the Uzbek perceptual order, it should be rendered as *gapishtga qo’ymayapti*.

Language is the primary powerful instrument for the continuous development of this complex world.

The renowned representative of world literature, Chingiz Aitmatov, in his article "A Word about Auezov" (1977), offered an exceptionally profound and figurative definition by stating that "Language is the self-portrait of a people." The meaning of the word self-portrait is well known: it refers to an image or portrait created by an artist or sculptor with their own hands. Indeed, for example, the Uzbek language reflects in full the character and appearance of the Uzbek people, their way of thinking and imagination, their past and present; most importantly, it is an objective image both internal and external "drawn" by the language itself and through its own means, as if by its "own hand." This image manifests itself throughout the processes of our people's millennia-long linguistic and historical development, in their unique cultural and intellectual, literary and artistic treasures. Such an image is a magnificent wealth worthy of cultivation and protection, of reverence and care, to be safeguarded like the apple of one's eye and guided ever further toward perfection.

It should be noted that any change or renewal occurring in the life of society is naturally and first of all clearly reflected in the vocabulary of the language. In this sense, language is also regarded as "the most precise and sensitive barometer of the social life of any human community." The world-renowned German writer Hermann Hesse stated that "words are the backbone and the primary elements of language." There is also a great scientific truth in this sharp figurative idea. As is well known, the spine is the foundation of the body, of the human skeleton; if the spine is healthy, a person's body and stature stand upright like a cypress, graceful and beautiful like a plane tree.

It may be said that this unintended new image created by the writer bears a beautiful logic without any pretension. Therefore, when speaking of the vitality and purity of a language, first of all it is precisely these words that is, the lexical layer of the language, its vocabulary richness that are meant. Indeed, in a person's understanding of the world and in the development of all its objects and concepts, whether great or small, words are the primary means. In this sense, the famous French writer Anatole France's remark about a type of dictionary that contains words of a language along with their appropriate explanations namely, that "a dictionary is the entire world arranged in alphabetical order" is most aptly and tellingly expressed.

About ten to fifteen years ago, an expedition organized

by the National Geographic Society discovered the Koro language in India, which had previously been unknown to science, and recorded it as the world's 6,909th language. It should be emphasized that among such a large number of languages on Earth, there is not a single one that is absolutely pure. At all times, a certain number of words have passed from one language into another. When these processes remain within a moderate and balanced norm, they have been regarded as a natural phenomenon; however, when they exceed that norm, the society that finds itself under the pressure of foreign lexical invasion feels its sense of dignity wounded. Therefore, no conscious member of a cultured and enlightened society has ever remained indifferent to such processes. As is well known to everyone, thanks to Uzbekistan's Law "On the State Language," the development and use of the Uzbek language have become free. However, in the initial period, driven by excessive and often misplaced enthusiasm, almost everyone began to invent or coin "new words" in their own way. At that time, using four, five, or even more terms to express a single concept brought not benefit but harm to the development of our language. In the press, contrived and inappropriate words such as tahsilgoh and minbargoh proliferated, as if they were capable of conveying the meaning of the word kafedra.

Tahsilgoh means any place where education is received or study is carried out, while minbargoh simply means a place where a rostrum is set. A person who hears these words would never, even at great effort, understand them to mean kafedra (department). When I encounter such illogical practices, something comes to mind. The English scholar of religion and historian-ethnologist James George Frazer describes a similar custom in his book *The Golden Bough*. According to a tradition among one of the Aboriginal tribes in Australia, when a person dies, uttering that person's name becomes forbidden. As is known, any personal name is at the same time a common noun, that is, it has a certain meaning and denotes some object or abstract concept in life. For example, personal names such as Po'lat (Steel), Lola (Tulip), Temir (Iron), and Arslon (Lion) are also common nouns naming corresponding objects. Let us suppose that a man named Po'lat passes away; from that day onward, this word becomes taboo that is, it disappears from the language. In its place, a new word is found and introduced to express the same meaning. Consequently, the vocabulary of that tribe's language is in a state of constant change. Frazer particularly emphasizes the following: "This custom, naturally, is a powerful factor in the change of a language's lexical stock; in regions where this custom is practiced,

processes of replacing obsolete (discarded) words with new ones constantly take place." Naturally, within one or two years at least 100–200 people die in that tribe, which means that the same number of words are completely renewed. What is astonishing is that if a member of that tribe were absent from the community for a year or two, upon returning they would have to relearn the vocabulary of their own mother tongue from scratch. This means that the lexical level of a language is entirely unstable and non-static. By mentioning this peculiar custom, I am deliberately somewhat exaggerating the situation we experienced in our own society in recent times. What I wish to say is this: attempting to drive all foreign words out of the Uzbek language, reacting irritably to every foreign term, and endlessly seeking Uzbek equivalents for them is not correct. For example, when the whole world uses terms such as morphology, syntax, mathematics, physics, and theorem, there is no benefit in our trying to express them with other Arabic, Persian, or some artificially coined words.

Foreign words that denote concepts related to modern advanced science, engineering, and technologies especially those from the English language are entering a great many languages. The well-known Russian Japanologist V. Alpatov even notes that in today's Japanese language, whose speakers are extremely cautious about the influence of other languages, fully 99 percent of the terminology related to computer technology consists of words borrowed from English.

A number of other languages for example, Arabic when borrowing words from other languages, invariably assimilate them to their own linguistic laws, with the result that their foreign origin is no longer immediately recognizable. For instance, the Uzbek word qonun (law) is borrowed from Arabic, and its phonetic structure fully conforms to the phonetic rules of Uzbek. However, this word is not originally Arabic; rather, it derives from the Greek word kanon, which was adapted to Arabic phonetics in the form qānūn. Similarly, the Greek word asphalt(os) was adapted into Arabic in the form isfilt, from which derivatives such as saflatat ("asphalting") and musaflat ("asphalted") were formed. The Greek word mechanica was borrowed as mīkānīk, with derivatives such as mīkānīkiyyāt ("mechanical"), mīkānīkiyyāt ("mechanics/mechanicalness"), maykanat ("mechanization"), and mumaykan ("mechanized"). Naturally, all these forms reflect the internal rules and patterns of the Arabic language.

When appropriate, it should also be noted that in linguistics the terms "borrowed word" and "assimilated word" are often used in parallel. In fact, it is advisable to use these terms in a differentiated manner. If a

foreign word appears in the receiving language exactly as it does in the source language (and has not been adapted to the phonetic rules of the receiving language), then it is correct to call such a foreign word a "borrowed word," because it has been taken over directly. If, however, a foreign word is adopted in a form adapted to the phonetic rules of the receiving language (or if its phonetic structure is inherently compatible), then the term "assimilated word" more accurately reflects the essence of the phenomenon, since in this case the foreign word has been assimilated that is, made one's own by the receiving language. When a foreign word is assimilated in this second way, the integral national character of the language is not harmed, the overall national coloring of the language's lexical wealth is not significantly affected, and the national vitality and freshness of the language are preserved in a healthy state.

However, such requirements imposed on a language's general vocabulary cannot be applied in the same way to all word groups in the language, especially to specialized vocabulary terminology. Terminology, and scientific-technical terminology in particular, is an integral component of fields of science and technology in which only a relatively small segment of language users is engaged; it mainly serves the communication of scholars and technical specialists. Therefore, in the creation of terms, the conscious intervention of scholars, their scientific activity, and subjective factors play a much stronger role. Specialists in the field note that terms are "the result of artificial human intervention in the natural course of a language's development," and therefore emphasize that specialized vocabulary as a whole is secondary in nature, being artificially created from existing, deliberately coined, or assimilated words. This, too, should not be forgotten.

It may be said that the changes occurring in the phonetic and grammatical structure of a language, first, are not synchronic but diachronic in nature that is, they do not take place within a single time frame but unfold over long periods of time; second, changes at these levels occur independently of social factors, that is, without being directly connected to events taking place in the life of society. By contrast, changes that occur in a language's lexicon its vocabulary most often take place within a specific time frame and are closely linked to social factors. Therefore, specialists emphasize that the development of a language's structure (grammar) proceeds largely as a spontaneous process, whereas processes connected with the development of the lexical surface layer are more often governed by the conscious intervention of members of society, with regulation and deliberate creativity playing a significant

role in the lexicon.

In our country, over the past seven or eight years, with the active and consistent efforts and relevant instructions of our Head of State, the Honorable Sh. Mirziyoyev, extremely large-scale and effective work has been carried out and is being carried out on the rapid development and improvement of the Uzbek language as the state language. As the historic Decree of our President "On measures to fundamentally increase the role and reputation of the Uzbek language as the state language" (October 21, 2019) quite rightly emphasized, "in today's era of globalization, it is natural for every nation, every independent state to pay priority attention to ensuring its national interests, and in this regard, first of all, to preserving and developing its culture, ancient values, and native language." The "Concept for the Development of the Uzbek Language and Improvement of Language Policy in 2020-2030", approved by the Decree of our President dated October 20, 2020 "On measures to further develop the Uzbek language and improve language policy in the country", specifically notes that "the systematic introduction of new scientifically based words and terms into official circulation" is one of the "expected results of the implementation of the concept."

Recently, the Terminology Commission under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan reviewed a set of such scientifically grounded new words and terms (40 units) and adopted a decision to introduce them into official usage. According to the established procedure, proposals concerning these words and terms were prepared by public-based Working Groups on Terminology operating within the central offices of executive authorities and economic associations, then compiled by the Department for the Development of the State Language. Subsequently, these proposals were examined by the working body of the Terminology Commission the expanded meeting of the Academic Council of the Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature, and Folklore of the Academy of Sciences with the participation of relevant field specialists, and appropriate scientific conclusions were reached. The new words and terms that passed the expert review were then published in the mass media for public discussion. The proposals on introducing these words and terms into official usage were reviewed by the expert group of the Terminology Commission, and relevant recommendations were issued. Accordingly, the proposal put forward by the members of the Terminology Commission on adapting borrowed words and terms from foreign languages to the norms of the Uzbek language was approved, and the list of scientifically grounded new words and terms

to be introduced into official usage was confirmed. It may be noted with satisfaction that most of the words and terms recommended and approved by the Terminology Commission indeed have a solid scientific basis and do not fall outside the established norms of the Uzbek language. For example, as an alternative to the clearly Russian word *внедорожник* (off-road vehicle), the approved term *yo'ltanlamas* conveys the intended meaning more precisely and vividly. Moreover, it fully conforms to the word-formation principles of the Uzbek language. This is because Uzbek has existing derivational models such as *ish+tanlamas* (indiscriminate in work), *ovqat+tanlamas* (not picky about food), and *joy+tanlamas* (place-indiscriminate), so the newly coined word does not suffer any loss of its inherent national coloring. Likewise, among the approved new words, those formed through affixation and compounding also remain well within the active normative patterns of the Uzbek language.

The word *bo'nak*, which is a genuinely Uzbek term approved as a substitute for the foreign loanword *avans* and may sound somewhat archaic, nevertheless conveys the intended meaning quite adequately. In the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, three meanings of the word *bo'nak* are given: in particular, the first two meanings are marked as "historical," while the third meaning is labeled as "a term related to accounting" and is defined as follows: "money given in advance on the condition that it will be settled at the end of the month from the salary; advance (payment)."

Among the approved new words, the term *o'ron* has been proposed as an equivalent for *parol*. This word was used quite widely in ancient or historical sources precisely in the sense of a "secret code word or sign," and even today writers continue to employ it in works of historical fiction.

It should be noted that when introducing scientifically grounded new words and terms into the language and eliminating foreign words from Uzbek usage, it is necessary to rely on the internal resources of the Uzbek language itself. For this purpose, the most appropriate approach is to coin new Uzbek words in accordance with the language's own rules, to revive ancient and old Turkic words that have fallen out of use for various reasons, and to draw words from folk dialects.

The development of our literary language does not depend solely on terminology. Our everyday vocabulary is also extremely important. One of the most significant sources for enriching the language is the people's speech that is, dialects. In folk speech there exist many words and expressions that are absent from the literary language. The contribution of masters of the word in introducing them into the literary

language is invaluable. Uzbekistan is a vast country, and its population includes representatives of the three major branches of the Turkic language Karluk, Kipchak, and Oghuz dialects. In one region of Uzbekistan agriculture and handicrafts are well developed, in another animal husbandry, and in yet another fishing. It is therefore advisable to seek words related to these fields that are not yet present in the literary language precisely from those regions.

The food scholar Karim Mahmudov once recounted the following episode in his memoirs. Having written down the method of preparing a certain dish, the scholar showed it to the keen word connoisseur Abdulla Kahhar. When the writer noticed the word ikra (caviar), he asked, "Isn't there an Uzbek equivalent for this?" The scholar replied, "One could say baliqning urug'i (fish seed)." The writer, who could see both the inner and outer sides of a word, retorted sharply, "What, do you think a fish is a plant?" After some reflection, the scholar answered, "Then let it be baliqning tuxumi (fish egg)." The writer replied, "A fish is not a chicken," and added that there was a distinct word for it in the people's speech. Later, during one of his trips, the scholar heard this word in Khorezm, where it is called uvuldiriq. If one works by drawing on folk dialects, and at the same time by making use of the Uzbek language's own inherent word-formation possibilities, it becomes possible to ensure the language's natural development. The firm foundation that guarantees the vitality, clarity, and purity of our language lies in our own native words; likewise, the assurance that the backbone of the language stands upright and healthy rests precisely on the support of those very native words.

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