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Semantic and Pragmatic Aspects of Morphonological Changes in the Uzbek Language

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Abstract: This article comprehensively analyzes the functional and structural characteristics of morphonological processes as they manifest at the dynamic level of speech within modern Uzbek linguistics. It particularly investigates the intricate role these phonologically conditioned morphological variations play in driving semantic conversion and facilitating pragmatic intensification during discourse. Operating within the fundamentally agglutinative typology of the Uzbek language, the study systematically illustrates the emerging phenomena of fusional elements, systemic lexicalization, and labial alternations occurring within reduplicated structural units. Through the lens of rigorous synchronous analysis, these complex shifts are illuminated using concrete, contextual linguistic evidence. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates how subtle morphonological mutations transcend mere phonetic adjustments, serving as vital tools for semantic differentiation, speaker intent styling, and the optimization of communicative efficiency.

Keywords: Morphonology, pragmalinguistics, fusional tendency, agglutinative structure, lexicalization, semantic differentiation, pragmatic intensification, reduplication mechanisms, morphemic reanalysis, principle of linguistic economy, speech level variations.

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Introduction

The evolutionary development of any language system is clearly manifested in its inter-level relationships, particularly in morphonological phenomena that occur at the intersection of phonetics, morphology, and semantics. Linguistic changes typically emerge first in dynamic oral speech before transitioning into written discourse and literary language norms. As a result, both the internal potential of the language and the communicative needs of human beings are enriched simultaneously.[1] While traditional linguistics has predominantly interpreted morphonological phenomena as purely formal (phonetic-morphological) modifications occurring within word-formation or inflectional processes, the modern anthropocentric and pragmatic linguistic paradigm assigns a distinct significance to these changes due to their role in shaping discursive meaning. The primary objective of this article is to systematically analyze—from linguistic, functional, and pragmatic perspectives—the extent to which morphonological variations observed within the literary language and live speech impact the meaning of discourse and transform lexical semantics. To achieve this task, the vast potential of the Uzbek language is examined within the context of concrete linguistic models.[2] A peculiar asymmetry between morphonological norms and spoken reality is observed in Arabic loanwords, which constitute one of the enrichment sources of the Uzbek language. Specifically, when

a possessive affix beginning with a vowel is attached to monosyllabic words that structurally contain a historical geminate (double) consonant (such as *haq* [right/truth], *sir* [secret], *xat* [letter], *rad* [rejection]), the law of historical root restoration or phonetic gemination (doubling) applies. However, according to current orthographic rules in Uzbek, the lexeme *haq* is designated as an exception and is written with a single *q* consonant in compounded structures (e.g., *ish haqi* [wages], *xizmat haqi* [service fee]).[3]

Despite this prescriptive rule, the tendency to pronounce and write this unit with a double *qq* (*haqqi*) has become highly active in the contemporary linguistic landscape—spanning social media, mass media, fiction, and even academic texts. This phenomenon can be observed across social networks [4], in literary works (such as: "...*yarim tanga haqqingizga*..." [...for your half-tanga right...] [5], "*Buning nima haqqi bor?*" [What right does this have?] [6], "*Xizmat haqqi mayli, siz aytgancha bo'lsin*" [Let the service fee be as you said] [7], "*Yaxshi ko'raman seni, xudo haqqi, yaxshi ko'raman!*" [I love you, swear to God, I love you!] [8]), as well as in scholarly publications (such as: "*Tarjimonning bunga nechog'li haqqi bor? Nazariyaga qarasangiz, haqqi yo 'q'*" [To what extent does a translator have the right to do this? If you look at theory, they have no right] [9]). From the perspective of speech pragmatics, this morphonological phenomenon is not merely a product of orthographic illiteracy or an accidental error; rather, it is a manifestation of semantic and pragmatic intensification (the strengthening of meaning). By producing a third sound within the speech flow (i.e., restoring the original geminate consonant), the speaker strengthens subjective emphasis, elevates the emotional register, and expands the scope of impact on the listener. Furthermore, a process of semantic differentiation (meaning bifurcation) takes place here. In the linguistic consciousness, the concept of *ish haqi* (a purely material equivalent, monthly salary) is mostly drawn toward the normative single-consonant form (*haqi*). Conversely, within contexts denoting moral, legal, social obligations, or oaths (e.g., *Bunga sening haqqing yo'q!* [You have no right to this!], *Xudo haqqi!* [Swear to God!]), the language user unconsciously resorts to the geminated *qq* variant (*haqqi*). As noted in the literature: "The functional elements of words that can be segmented morphemically are regularly repeated within the structure of other words alongside their formalized linguistic shape and meaning; their root component preserves its highly generalized lexical meaning, while the affixal part maintains its specific derivative or descriptive meaning without modification" [10]. Consequently, this morphonological shift serves as a functional mechanism to cognitively differentiate between material and immaterial concepts.

Methodology

The Uzbek language typologically belongs to the agglutinative system, wherein each morpheme typically maintains clear structural boundaries and a monosemantic (one-to-one) correspondence. However, driven by the principles of linguistic economy in spontaneous speech and diachronic evolution, the inter-morphemic boundaries often blur, giving rise to fusional tendencies. This phenomenon causes agglutination to partially yield its structural rigidity. The following morphonological models substantiate this shift:

Boraman (*bor + a + men* → *boraman* [I am going]): The personal-number marker undergoes modification under the influence of vocalic harmony and phonetic assimilation, disrupting the principle of mechanical concatenation and obscuring the morphemic boundary.[11]

Og'ayni (*og'a + ini* → *og'ayni* [brother/friend]): During the compounding process of two distinct lexical units, the root-initial vowel [i] of the second component undergoes elision, leading to the stabilization of the epenthetic (connecting) consonant [y] between the bases.

Qorong'u (*qora + n + g'u* → *qorong'u* [dark]): The insertion of the phoneme [n] between the color-denoting base and the historical affix, combined with the vocalic alternation [a]→[o], completely seals the morphemic boundaries.

Kichray (*kichik* + *r* + *ay* → *kichray* [to shrink]): During the derivational process, an entire structural segment [ik] drops out from the root, causing the word to lose its capability for synchronous morphological segmentation.

These phonetic-morphonological modifications fundamentally update conversational semantics. The chain of individual grammatical morphemes is replaced by unified, semantically differentiated conceptual units. In generating discourse expressiveness and articulatory ease, reduplicative and paired words play a vital role. Specifically, the bilabial consonants [p] and [m] display high morphonological functionality within reduplicated components in the Uzbek language. This phonetic conversion operates based on the following semantic models:

Model A: [ch,n,d,t]→[p/m] Conversion. In forms such as *choy-poy* (tea and the like), *narsa-parsa* (things), *piyola-miyola* (cups, etc.), *pul-mul* (money and stuff), and *dazmol-pazmol* (irons and such), the initial consonant of the reduplicated segment becomes labialized. Beyond facilitating articulatory convenience, this generates a sense of categorization. That is, the specific noun is generalized to encompass its entire surrounding class of coordinate objects.

Model B: Primary [p]→[m] Alternation. When reduplicated forms are derived from bases initially starting with the consonant [p] (e.g., *paxta* [cotton], *pista* [pistachio], *patir* [flatbread], *paqir* [bucket]), the phoneme [m] is activated in accordance with the law of dissimilation: *paxta-maxta*, *pista-mista*, *patir-matir*, *paqir-maqir*.

The morphonological alternations within these models are not merely driven by a need for phonetic rhythm or rhyming; rather, they serve as specialized linguistic templates that inject an intensive, generalizing semantic load—such as "collectivity," "all of it," or "and the like"—into the discourse. In oral communicative practice, template-based reduplication accompanied by internal phonetic modifications serves as the primary mechanism for generating the intensive degree of adjectives. During the reduplication of monosyllabic roots like *chin* (true), *sog'* (healthy), or *teng* (equal), the insertion of the consonant [p] and a simultaneous modification of the root vowel are observed: *chippa-chin* (absolutely true), *soppa-sog'* (perfectly healthy), *teppa-teng* (absolutely equal). These morphonological units, having undergone deep structural mutation, impart a subjective-modal attitude, intensification, and a heightened emotional register to the discourse. Through this mechanism, the speaker more effectively conveys the absolute nature of a feature or state to the listener's consciousness, thereby expanding the pragmatic impact of the communication. Complex morphonological processes occurring within the derivational (word-formation) system occasionally impede the synchronous segmentation of newly formed lexemes into constituent morphemes. Within the scope of this study, these processes have been classified into two distinct manifestations:

1. **Synchronously Opaque (Complex) Alternation:** Exemplified by *raqs* (dance) → *raqqosa* (female dancer). Segmenting the boundary between the root and the affix in this derivative form is highly problematic. Historically shaped by Arabic word-formation paradigms, this unit exhibits a blending and assimilation of the root-final [s] and the infixed consonant [q]. Although this preservation maintains an etymological link within the linguistic consciousness, it limits synchronous structural reanalysis, forcing the language user to process it as a single, holistic conceptual unit.
2. **Synchronously Transparent (Simple) Alternation:** Exemplified by *chal* (to play an instrument) → *cholg'u* (musical instrument). In this model, attaching the derivative morpheme -g'u to the root triggers a specific morphonological "pressure." Consequently, the root vowel undergoes an [a]→[o] alternation. Although the morph boundary is structurally preserved, this morphonological shift runs parallel to a shift in part-of-speech category and a renewal of lexical semantics.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of redundancy (pleonasm) in Uzbek morphonology and its relationship to discourse meaning invites particular scholarly interest. Specifically, the usage of derivatives like *birisi* (one of them), *uchisi* (the three of them), *to'rtisi* (the four of them), *beslisi* (the five of them), *ko'pisi* (most of them), *singlisi* (his/her younger sister), and *yarmisi* (half of it) is widely observable in both spoken speech and literary styles. Structural analysis reveals that the initial possessive marker (-i) retains its morphemic attraction but completely loses its semantic autonomy. In these types of morphonological patterns, the first possessive affix practically transforms into a purely connective, constructive-functional element. Lacking its own semantic load within the semasiological field, such pleonastic units do not induce serious semantic transformations or novel meaning conversions within discourse. In other words, the distinction between variants like *ularning birisi* and *ularning biri* is phonostylistic rather than conceptual; it manifests as a subjective speech habit and does not alter the core informational content of the utterance.[12]

Results and Discussion

A comparative study of morphonological variations within both the base component (lexeme phonology) and the affixal component (morph phonology) yields profound insights into the historical evolutionary processes of a language system. In many cases, while reductions occur at the absolute end of a word, systemic transformations are simultaneously observed within its root component—namely, the erosion of root vowels or consonants under affixal pressure. During this process, the initial syllable of the lexeme typically remains stable, while the subsequent syllables undergo structural mutation. The evolutionary formation of the lexemes *alla* (lullaby) and *alda-* (to deceive) serves as a prominent historical-etymological proof of morphonological differentiation (meaning bifurcation). On a diachronic level, these two distinct linguistic units trace back to a single genetic root in Old Turkic: the base *al* (trickery, fraud, deception). The divergence of this common root into new words with independent semantic profiles shifted toward a phonetic method of word formation, unfolding along two separate branches:

The First Branch (Noun Formation): The attachment of the verbalizing suffix *-la* to the historical root *al* initially generated the structural relationship *al+la*. Subsequently, due to the blurring of morphemic boundaries and simplification (de-morphologization), this unit evolved into the modern Uzbek literary lexeme *alla* (a noun denoting a lullaby song and an abstract concept). Here, the primary semantic domain of "distracting" or "soothing[13]" shifted conceptually to calming and pacifying a child by singing a lullaby.

The Second Branch (Verb Formation): The attachment of the variant suffix *-da* to the same root *al* (*al+da-*), paired with a subsequent [l] → [d] alternation (consonant substitution), allowed the contemporary lexeme *alda-* (a verb denoting an action) to achieve structural autonomy. This branch directly preserved the historical-etymological semantics of the root—namely, the semantic content of "cheating, deceiving, or conjuring." From a synchronous perspective, both words have undergone simplification (coalescence) over time, assuming a distinct fusional appearance today. One of the most active manifestations of morphonological transformations at the speech level, particularly within dialectal environments, is the omission of specific segments or sounds within or at the end of a word (elision and syncope). The structural contrast between the Uzbek literary language and its dialects is clearly illustrated in the following models:

Vocalic/Consonantal Shifts at Word-Initial and Word-Medial Positions: *shishmoq* → *ishmoq* (to swell).

Apocope of Sonants and Plosives at Word-Final Positions: *go'sht* → *go'sh* (meat), *g'isht* → *g'ish* (brick), *dasht* → *dash* (steppe), *daraxt* → *darax* (tree), *karaxt* → *karax* (numb), *past* → *pas* (low), *rost* → *ros* (true).

Syllabic Economy and Final Vowel/Consonant Loss: *yo'q* \rightarrow *yo'* (no/none), *tuzuk* \rightarrow *tuzu* (well/fine), *yirik* \rightarrow *yiri* (large), *kichik* \rightarrow *kichi* (small).[14]

The core driver of these dialectal morphonological shifts is the pragmalinguistic principle of linguistic economy (the law of least effort). During spontaneous communication, speakers morphonologically streamline the word structure to avoid redundant phonetic articulations and accelerate the speed of information transmission. Within localized groups, this mechanism accelerates speech interpretation and unburdens communication from excessive linguistic weight. Within the system of derivative verbs and verbal voices, morphonological conversions actively participate in modifying action semantics. The processes of elision (sound omission), prothesis (sound addition), or alternation that occur when affixes attach to the root serve to intensify action dynamics or redirect its orientation. When voice or aspect affixes are attached to verbal bases, the systemic reduction of root-internal vowels or the assimilation of consonants driven by the economy principle (e.g., *ayt+il* \rightarrow *aytil-* [to be said], *kiy+in* \rightarrow *kiyin-* [to dress oneself]) establishes clear semantic boundaries regarding the degree to which an action is directed toward the subject or object. These processes provide speakers with the flexibility to alter action dynamics in alignment with the context, effectively channeling the listener's attention to a specific focal point.[15]

Conclusion

Carried out within the contemporary anthropocentric, functional-pragmatic, and cognitive paradigms of Uzbek linguistics, this study allows for the following fundamental, systemic conclusions regarding the linguistic nature of morphonological transformations occurring at the intersection of language levels:

1. **The Concept of Discursive Intensification and Semantic Differentiation:** The historical processes of root reduplication found in Arabic loanwords (specifically the *haq / haqqi* model) and the structural modifications in the expressive reduplication of adjectives (*chippa-chin*, *soppa-sog'*, *teppa-teng*) cannot be dismissed as mere speech variations or orthographic deviations. Rather, these morphonological alterations constitute a highly sophisticated conceptual mechanism. They serve to materialize the speaker's subjective-modal attitude, enhance the pragmatic impact of the information (intensification), and unconsciously separate material concepts from immaterial (social, moral, legal) terms within the linguistic consciousness (semantic differentiation).
2. **The Formation of Categorization and Universal Generalization Semes:** The bilabial consonant alternations actively observed within paired and reduplicated word systems (the [ch, n, d, t] \rightarrow [p/m] conversion, e.g., *choy-poy*, *narsa-parsa*, *piyola-miyola*) and the laws of dissimilation governing initial m-structures (*paxta-mahta*, *pista-mista*) introduce a distinct cognitive load into discourse meaning. As a result of these morphonological modifications, the concrete base lexeme expands beyond its denotative boundary to encompass the entire class of coordinate objects and related concepts. This generates a sense of universal categorization and collective generalization while expending minimal linguistic effort during communication.
3. **Fusional Tendencies and Lexicalization Pressures Within the Agglutinative System:** Although the Uzbek language possesses a strict agglutinative structure by typological nature, it increasingly exhibits fusional symptoms driven by conversational economy and diachronic socio-linguistic evolution. In models like *boraman*, *og'ayni*, *qorong'u*, and *kichray*, the erosion of segments and the blurring of morphemic boundaries transform chains of individual, grammatically independent morphemes into holistic, lexicalized conceptual units. This process deepens under progressive morphonological "pressure" during derivation (*raqqosa*, *cholg'u*), acting as a primary factor that complicates the synchronous segmentation of roots and

affixes, ultimately posing significant challenges for morphemic reanalysis within the linguistic system.

4. **The Functional-Constructive Nature of Pleonastic Structural Models:** An analysis of structural redundancy (pleonasm) and alternative variants within the language system (such as *birisi*, *uchisi*, *to'rtisi*, *yarmisi*, *singlisi*) indicates that not every morphonological insertion necessarily generates a novel semantic load or conceptual shift. The initial possessive marker (-i) within these pleonastic constructions completely loses its semantic autonomy in practice, functioning purely as a phonostylistic cohesive and formal coordinating element. Consequently, it does not induce a fundamental semantic conversion within the discourse, but rather reflects a subjective speech habit and contextual convenience.
5. **Segmental Erosion and Macro-Differentiation at the Diachronic Level:** From a historical-etymological perspective, the divergence of the single genetic root *al* (trickery, fraud, deception)—originating in Old Turkic—into two distinct branches under affixal pressure, combined with the activation of the internal [l]→[d] consonant alternation (*al+la* > *alla* and *al+da-* > *alda-*), reveals the highest functional potential of morphonological transformations. This phenomenon serves as the primary cognitive driver that allowed completely different, independent parts of speech (noun and verb) and opposing lexical-semantic domains (*alla* [to soothe/sing a lullaby] vs. *alda-* [to deceive/cheat]) to grow and separate from a single, shared genetic base over time.
6. **The Laws of Linguistic Economy and Dialectal Interpretation:** The instances of segmental erosion, syncope, and elision actively observed within dialectal systems and localized spoken environments (*go'sh[t]*, *darax[t]*, *tuzu[k]*, *kichi[k]*) provide concrete empirical proof of the pragmalinguistic principle of "least effort." In order to maximize the speed of information transmission and streamline the physical articulation of the speech apparatus, the speaker morphonologically shortens the word structure. Within specific regional communities, this mechanism accelerates linguistic interpretation and liberates discourse from redundant fusional weight.

In conclusion, within modern Uzbek linguistics, treating morphonological changes merely as mechanical alignment, a prescriptive orthographic rule, or a dry phonetic phenomenon is no longer scholastically sufficient. Morphonological transformations represent a fundamental instrumental mechanism operating at the absolute intersection of language levels (phonetics, morphology, lexicology, semantics, and pragmatics). They coordinate the thematic meaning of discourse, regulate the communicative relationship between the speaker and the listener, and drive both the internal evolutionary dynamics and the pragmatic expressiveness of the language system as a whole.

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