

SEMANTIC AND FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF THE LEXICON IN “DEVONI MIRZO”

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Abstract: This article examines the functional-semantic features of lexical units used in Muhammadrasul Mirzo’s “Devon,” a work written in Khorezm during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The study analyzes these features through examples of anthroponyms, toponyms, military terms, and zoononyms. It highlights how onomastic units, deviating from their primary referential meanings, are used in poetic texts to convey expressiveness and social-evaluative nuances.

Anthroponyms in the “Devon” serve both nominative and stylistic-expressive purposes. Beyond their nominative function, they are utilized as important stylistic devices. In describing characters within the poet’s works, names such as Farhod, Yusuf, Shirin, Layli, Majnun, Bahrom, and others are employed to evoke artistic spirit.

Toponyms like Chin, Misr, Rum, Hindu, China, Khorezm, Badakhshan, Yemen, Oman, Khotan, Aden, Rum, Hind, and Kayqubod are pragmatically used to symbolize the ideal of beauty pursued by the author.

Keywords: poetic language, lexicon, anthroponym, toponym, military terminology, zoonym, ghazal, muhammas, stylistic coloring, lexicalization, emotional-expressiveness.

Introduction

Muhammadrasul Niyozmuhammad oglu Mirzo’s “Devon” is a monumental poetic collection consisting of 2,698 bayts or 5,396 lines, transcribed in nasta’liq script by Umar Khoja Ibrohim Khoja in the year 1323 AH (1905–1906 AD). The total number of word forms used throughout these 8,912 lines exceeds 35,133, representing 3,555 lexemes.

In his poetic collection, the poet employed several features of lexical polysemy, as only by treating a word as a multifaceted phenomenon is it possible to fully analyze it. Recognizing each facet of a word as relatively independent, distinguishing similarities and particularities among them, and interpreting them by classifying into groups reflects the poet’s intellectual creativity.

Studying the functional-semantic properties—one of the facets of a lexeme—through onomastic units provides an opportunity to specify Muhammadrasul Mirzo’s lexical mastery in word usage.

Materials and Methods

A literary work—especially a poetic one—holds particular value due to its artistic, figurative, and expressive scope, which depends on the genre’s characteristics. Many onomastic units can bear the burden of such expressive tasks.

Toponymy, a branch of onomastics, is concerned with the study of geographic names and is also a section of lexicology that investigates geographical nomenclature. It can also refer to the

collection of place names within a specific region [1]. In poetic language, toponyms possess not only naming semantics but also linguistic-poetic value; the author conveys the intended message through the symbolic value of place names.

Military terms generally denote semantic units related to war, battles, and combat in historical texts, whereas in poetry, such nominative meanings give way to artistic expression and figurative language. Since “Devon” is a collection of lyrical works, such terms are utilized precisely for these expressive purposes.

Typically, the names of wild and domestic animals, birds, fish, and other creatures are considered zoonyms. However, in “Devoni Mirzo”, the use of zoonyms has been narrowed in scope—they are used as “zoosemisms” to convey metaphorical meanings, often to characterize human traits. These units are primarily employed to express figurative meanings in poetic language, unveiling new aspects of the poet’s stylistic expression and representing a unique manifestation of emotional-expressive coloration.

All the theonyms, having stepped away from their denotative meanings, have adopted artistic semantic functions such as description, metaphor, comparison, and analogy, thereby serving as linguistic tools to express the poet’s intellectual depth.

In essence, though comparison and metaphor play an exceptionally important role in understanding and conceptualizing the world, as has been emphasized, no form of knowledge is devoid of axiology—that is, the evaluation of the known in one way or another [15]. The author of Devon also managed to attain the highest level of artistic expression through the use of musical terms in his stylistic language.

Analysis and Conclusion Discussion

To identify the essence of the lexical units used in the work, it is reasonable to classify them into thematic groups. For this reason, we interpret the vocabulary employed in Mirzo’s Devon—drawn from the poetic language of his time—by organizing it into several categories.

In Devon, anthroponyms generally serve two primary functions:

Nominative, and

Stylistic-expressive.

Anthroponyms such as Navoi, Umar Khayyam, Firooz, Ogahiy, Fuzuli, Nasimi, and Tabibi perform nominative functions by referencing historical figures. Through these, the poet seeks to infuse his lines with feelings of pride toward the great representatives of classical Uzbek poetry, whom he regarded as his literary ideals.

For example, the name Navoi appears five times in Devon, mostly in praise sections of Mirzo’s ghazals or within mukhammases dedicated to Navoi. Consider the following:

Bu yanglig‘ kecha, Mirzo, vasl ila kimga nasib o‘lsa,

Navoiydek yotar to subhi mahshar tarki xob aylab (6/2).

The fact that this couplet appears both at the end of a ghazal and within a mukhammās reveals Mirzo’s commitment to the Navoian tradition. Similarly, Shermuhammad Munis, whom Muhammadrasul considered his mentor, wrote:

Qilsa hosid daxli bejo so‘z aro yo‘qdur g‘amam,

Ushbu ma’nida Navoiy ruhi homiydur menga.

This confirms that from the time of Alisher Navoi to the 20th century, the literary tradition upheld by Uzbek poets was characteristic of Mirzo’s poetry as well. Thus, it is justifiable to state that 59% of the vocabulary in Mirzo’s bayoz is based on the lexicon used by Alisher Navoi.

The name Ogahiy appears four times in the work, praising the skilled Khorezm poet’s refined literary abilities—an opinion widely shared among Uzbek writers:

Emdi tadqiq ila bir matla’ bitarga til ochay,

Qo‘lg‘a olib xoma istab Ogahiyning himmatin (51/1).

Additionally, names such as Umar Khayyam, Firooz, Fuzuli, Nasimi, and Tabibi—renowned masters of Persian and Turkic poetry—add nominative stylistic depth and poetic brilliance to the poet’s verses.

In Devoni Mirzo, anthroponyms also serve as stylistic tools beyond mere naming. Within narrative poems, such names—Farhod, Yusuf, Shirin, Layli, Majnun, Bahrom, Jamshid, Hotam, Avaz, Said Muhammad Rahim, To‘ra Sayyid Isfandiyor, Sulaymon, Haydar, and Abdulla—are used to convey literary and emotional essence.

These names can be divided into two categories:

Names of various literary figures, and

Names of historical figures.

Linguostylistically, the first group consists of fictional names, while the second refers to real individuals.

In the bayoz, such names carry certain artistic-stylistic meaning and help convey specific traits of the characters. This expressive coloring can be realized through several stylistic devices. Moreover, in anthroponyms, stylistic coloring may reflect social value and textual-stylistic context.

Toponyms

The following 17 toponyms are used in Devoni Mirzo: Chin, Misr, Rum, Hindu, Xitoy, Khorezm, Badakhshan, Yemen, Oman, Khotan, Aden, Yemen, Rum, Hind, Kayqubod.

Toponymy is a branch of onomastics dealing with geographical names, intersecting with fields such as historical linguistics, dialectology, etymology, and lexicology. It also closely relates to history, geography, and ethnography. In Devoni Mirzo, however, the function of toponyms shifts to metaphorical usage, representing similes and poetic imagery.

This is because, as noted:

"Language is not only a means of human communication and a tool to express thought, emotion, and desire, but also the external, real form in which the imagery of literary art is embodied" [22].

In the bayoz, none of the toponyms retain their pure appellative meaning. Instead, due to the poetic nature of the source, they represent figurative and metaphorical semantics—that is, the derived and stylistically colored meaning dominates. For example:

Husn avjini mohidur ul davrida dilbarlar nujum,

Bordur oning ollida qul ahli Xitoyu Chinu Rum (46/2).

In this couplet, the names China, Chin, Rum, and Hindu are used metaphorically to indicate that even the beauties of those lands would appear as servants before the beloved being described. This is a clear use of pragmatic metaphor.

As noted in many scholarly studies, similes often emerge through metaphor. For instance:

"In Uzbek, metaphor occurs in speech when a new semantic layer emerges in the derived meaning, such as the words 'lion,' 'eagle,' 'hawk,' 'deer,' and 'wolf' referring to people, or 'ruby,' 'diamond,' 'almond,' and 'flower' referring to body parts. These derived meanings carry pragmatic significance" [17].

In Devon, this technique is applied through toponyms, producing metaphors such as:

La'l-i Badakhshan (Ruby of Badakhshan)

Aqiq-i Yaman (Carnelian of Yemen)

Durri Adan (Pearl of Aden)

Guhar-i Ummon (Gem of Oman)

These expressions elevate a description beyond simple adjectives like beautiful, charming, or fair, enhancing the poetic intensity and aesthetic richness.

In this way, Muhammadrasul Mirzo demonstrates a profound understanding of language not merely as a set of symbols, but as a cognitive process that enables conceptualization through imagery—a hallmark of cognitive linguistics.

For example:

Labi jon berurg'a la'li Badaxshon banda,

Tishi durdonasig'a gavhari g'alton banda (51/1).

Remaining faithful to literary tradition, Mirzo uses numerous military terms such as enemy, foe, rival, sword, army, shield, arrow, invader, executioner, attack, trap, troops, bow, adversary, execution, dagger, rider, prison, killer, revenge, sacrifice, opponent, and others throughout the bayoz.

These words, though military in origin, serve primarily artistic functions in this poetic context. The language of the poem, unrestricted by literalism, evokes deep emotional and psychological states through rich metaphorical imagery.

Only a poet who skillfully and purposefully employs language—the primary tool of artistic creation—can awaken the emotional wealth and passion of the reader. In this sense, Mirzo’s use of military vocabulary in Devon clearly serves to intensify emotional expressiveness and poetic effect.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

To identify the poetic essence of the lexical units used in “Devoni Mirzo”, it is appropriate to classify them into thematic groups and analyze them systematically. Notably, the artistic use of anthroponyms, toponyms, theonyms, military terms, and other lexical layers reflects a deliberate creative concept.

Anthroponyms

Anthroponyms in the divan fulfill two primary functions:

Nominative function — directly referencing historical or literary figures;

Stylistic-expressive function — serving as figurative and descriptive tools.

For instance, the names of classical poets such as Navoi, Omar Khayyam, Fuzuli, Nasimi, and Ogahiy appear as benchmarks reflecting the poet’s literary ideals. The frequent mention of Navoi, especially in dedications or lyrical expressions, highlights this reverence:

Bu yanglig‘ kecha, Mirzo, vasl ila kimga nasib o‘lsa,

Navoiydek yotar to subhi mahshar tarki xob aylab. (6/2)

This couplet not only illustrates deep respect for Navoi but also attests to the poet’s devotion to classical tradition. Moreover, figures such as Farhod, Yusuf, Layli, Majnun, Bahrom, and Jamshid are employed as symbolic elements, enriching the poetic imagery.

Toponyms

In “Devoni Mirzo”, 17 toponyms such as Chin, Rum, China, Egypt, Oman, Aden, Badakhshan, and Yemen are used. Almost all of these have transcended their denotative (literal) meanings to acquire metaphorical or comparative significance:

Husn avjini mohidur ul davrida dilbarlar nujum,

Bordur oning ollida qul ahli Xitoyu Chinu Rum. (46/2)

In this couplet, China, Chin, and Rum symbolize the pinnacle of beauty and grace, highlighting the poet’s ability to construct conceptual metaphors through geographical references.

Military Lexicon

Lexical units such as *asir* (captive), *aghyar* (stranger/enemy), *dushman* (enemy), *yov* (foe), *sipoh* (army), *tig'* (sword), *o'q* (arrow), *kamon* (bow), *khanjar* (dagger), *zindon* (prison) serve to heighten the emotional and expressive power of the poetry. These terms serve two key functions:

As synonymous variants, they prevent repetition and enrich stylistic variation;

As metaphorical imagery, they express inner conflicts and emotional turmoil.

Muhiblar bori rahzan o'ldi manga,

Bori do'stlar dushman o'ldi manga. (60/2)

Here, the word “*dushman*” (enemy) is not a literal adversary, but a lyrical rival, embodying a personal, emotional conflict in metaphorical form.

Additionally, the synonymous series such as *ag'yor* ~ *dushman* ~ *raqib* ~ *aduv* ~ *yov* (each meaning enemy or rival, with roots in Arabic, Persian, or Turkic) demonstrate how multilingual lexical layering adds to the richness of poetic expression and semantic depth.

Theonyms and Other Figurative Elements

Theonyms (names of divine entities) in the *divan* have been distanced from their literal religious meanings to serve figurative and stylistic purposes, aiding in the expression of the poet's intellectual and spiritual vision.

Zoomorphic terms and lexical units related to space (*makon*) and time (*zamon*) have also been metaphorically and metonymically employed, shaping vivid and emotionally charged imagery. For instance:

Siz kibi bexor gulni istabon shomu sahar,

Bordurur Mirzoyi mahzun, andalibi zoringiz. (16/2)

Here, the image of *andalib* (nightingale) represents the poet himself — a sorrowful lover whose emotions are conveyed through the lamenting voice of a bird.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The lexical units in Muhammadrasul Mirzo's “*Devon*” serve poetic demands by delivering semantic depth, while also fulfilling metrical and rhyming constraints.

The poet skillfully incorporates anthroponyms and toponyms to enhance the credibility and liveliness of depiction.

The usage of zoomorphic, spatial, and temporal lexical elements provides valuable insights into the lexical wealth of the Uzbek language.

Theonyms have undergone semantic transformation, taking on metaphorical and descriptive functions to reflect the poet's intellectual world.

The onomastic elements used in the *divan*, often as occasionalisms, demonstrate a high level of poetic mastery and linguistic intuition, culminating in deeply metaphorical meanings and logical-emotional cohesion.

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