

Semantic Occasional Derivation in Uzbek Poetry: A Cognitive-Linguistic Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines semantic occasional derivation in selected contemporary Uzbek poems from a cognitive-linguistic perspective. It focuses on cases in which an existing lexical form retains its formal structure but acquires an individualized, context-dependent meaning in poetic discourse. The analysis is based on selected passages from poems by Zebo Mirzo and Mirzo Kenjabek. Expressions such as “sevib bo‘ldim Sizsiz o‘limni,” “o‘limni ... ko‘tarmoq,” “buloqdirsiz,” “suvsab o‘lsam,” “ishqqa o‘xshab ketgan ta‘m,” “jimjit yig‘layotgan majnuntollar,” and “qalbingda ... qabrim bor” are examined through contextual-semantic and cognitive analysis. The study distinguishes semantic occasional derivation from ordinary metaphor, lexicalized figurative meaning, and morphological nonce formation. The findings show that poetic semantic innovation is produced through paradoxical conceptualization, metaphorical transfer, embodied experience, personification, and contextual semantic extension. Concrete domains such as physical burden, thirst, taste, bodily injury, natural space, and burial space are recruited to conceptualize love, suffering, longing, memory, and emotional alienation. The study argues that occasionality arises not from metaphor alone, but from the degree of contextual dependence and semantic individualization. Thus, semantic occasional derivation can be viewed as a form of conceptual creativity at the interface of derivation, semantics, cognitive linguistics, and poetic discourse.

Keywords: Semantic occasional derivation; occasionalism; Uzbek poetry; cognitive linguistics; conceptual metaphor; poetic discourse; lexical creativity.

Introduction

Poetic discourse provides a productive environment for lexical and semantic creativity. Poets may create new lexical forms, modify established derivational patterns, or reinterpret familiar words in ways that depend on a particular poetic context. The last of these is especially relevant when formal structure remains unchanged but semantic organization is altered.

The notion of derivation has traditionally been associated with the relationship between a base and a derived linguistic unit. Kuryłowicz’s distinction between lexical and syntactic derivation broadened discussion of how linguistic forms may enter derivational relations. Later approaches

to semantic change and lexical creativity demonstrated that innovation may also occur through shifts in meaning rather than through overt formal modification.

For poetic language, this distinction is important because a conventional lexical item can acquire an interpretation that is unavailable or highly restricted outside the poem. Such cases stand between established figurative usage and fully new lexical formation. Cognitive linguistics provides a useful framework for describing this process because it treats meaning as an aspect of conceptualization and explains how concrete experiential domains structure abstract experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Johnson, 1987).

The present study examines selected poetic passages by Zebo Mirzo and Mirzo Kenjabek. It addresses three questions: (1) how semantic occasional derivation can be distinguished from ordinary metaphorical usage; (2) which semantic and cognitive mechanisms motivate the reinterpretation; and (3) how such reinterpretations contribute to the representation of emotional and existential experience.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Semantic derivation and occasionality

Semantic derivation is understood here as a change or extension in the interpretation of an existing lexical form without obligatory formal modification. The relevant process can be represented as conventional meaning → contextual reinterpretation → derived poetic meaning. Historical semantic research has described numerous ways in which lexical meanings develop, but the present study is synchronic: it concerns meanings constructed within a particular poetic context rather than meanings that have become established in the language.

Occasionalisms, or nonce formations, are generally characterized by limited distribution, contextual motivation, and incomplete conventionalization. In poetic discourse, however, innovation does not necessarily create a new word. An existing word may be conceptually reorganized while retaining its lexical form. The working definition adopted in this study is therefore: semantic occasional derivation is a contextually motivated reinterpretation of an existing lexical form in which its conventional semantic potential is extended, redirected, or conceptually restructured to express an individual poetic meaning.

This definition also establishes a methodological boundary. A metaphorical expression is not automatically an occasionalism. The analysis requires evidence of contextual dependence, semantic novelty, individual poetic motivation, and limited conventionalization. This prevents established metaphors or ordinary polysemous relations from being classified as occasional formations.

2.2. Cognitive-semantic perspective

Conceptual Metaphor Theory explains metaphor as a mapping between conceptual domains rather than merely a decorative substitution of words (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Embodied cognition further emphasizes the role of bodily experience in the formation of abstract concepts (Johnson, 1987). These approaches are particularly relevant to poetry, where physical experiences such as thirst, weight, heat, touch, taste, and spatial containment can structure abstract experiences.

In the present material, semantic innovation is associated with several recurring conceptual relations: emotional suffering as a burden, emotional longing as thirst, emotional pain as bodily

injury, emotional experience as taste, psychological memory as physical space, and human emotion as a property of nature. The analytical task is not to label every metaphor as occasional, but to determine when a particular contextual mapping produces an individualized semantic configuration.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employs qualitative contextual, semantic, and cognitive analysis. The empirical material consists of selected passages from poems by Zebo Mirzo and Mirzo Kenjabek, including Mirzo Kenjabek's "Jazo." The analysis deliberately remains within the supplied poetic material and does not introduce unrelated examples.

Each expression is examined through four analytical stages: identification of the lexical form; reconstruction of its conventional semantic domain; interpretation of the contextual meaning; and identification of the cognitive mechanism and poetic function. The distinction among lexical occasional formation, semantic occasional derivation, and conventional metaphorical expression is maintained throughout the analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Zebo Mirzo: death, burden, thirst, taste, and bodily experience

The expression "Sevib bo'ldim Sizsiz o'limni" ('I have come to love death without you') provides a clear case of paradoxical semantic reinterpretation. The lexical form o'lim ('death') is formally unchanged, but its relation to the verb sevmoq ('to love') creates a conceptual conflict. Death conventionally denotes the termination of life; in the poem it is reconstructed as an object of emotional attachment. The later repetition, "Sevsam endi sevgum O'limni," confirms that this is not an isolated combination but a central conceptual structure of the poem. The innovation therefore occurs primarily at the level of conceptual organization: DEATH → OBJECT OF EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT.

A related construction appears in "Nasib ekan so'ngsiz o'limni / Tirik vujud bilan ko'tarmoq." The verb ko'tarmoq ('to lift, carry') normally selects a physically movable object. Its combination with "so'ngsiz o'lim" ('endless death') transfers the physical domain of carrying into emotional experience. The resulting model can be formulated as EMOTIONAL SUFFERING IS A BURDEN. The adjective so'ngsiz also reverses the ordinary temporal logic of death: an endpoint becomes an enduring condition. The expression consequently compresses physical endurance and existential suffering into a single construction.

The expression "Buloqdirsiz – sokin va beg'am" ('You are a spring—calm and unconcerned') transfers properties of a natural spring to a person. Buloq ('spring') belongs to the domain of nature and water, whereas the predicate is applied to a human addressee. The transfer foregrounds qualities such as calmness, continuity, and naturalness. The construction is significant because a concrete natural entity becomes a resource for human characterization without any morphological innovation.

In "Poyingizda suvsab o'lsam ham," physical thirst is redirected toward emotional longing. Suvsamoq ('to thirst') conventionally denotes a bodily need for water, but the surrounding context supports an interpretation of intense emotional need. The extension to "o'lsam" ('even if I die') increases the intensity of the mapping: PHYSICAL THIRST → EXTREME EMOTIONAL

LONGING. Here bodily experience functions as the conceptual basis for an abstract emotional state.

The phrase “Ishqqa o‘xshab ketgan ta‘mangiz” (‘a taste resembling love’) transfers sensory vocabulary into the domain of emotional evaluation. Ta‘m (‘taste’) normally refers to a sensory property, while the poem uses it to characterize a deceptive or ambiguous emotional experience. The expression therefore creates a sensory-emotional mapping in which an affective experience is represented as something that can be tasted and evaluated.

Finally, “Yuragimni yulib tashlayman” (‘I will tear out my heart’) combines the conventional association of the heart with emotion and the violent physical action yulib tashlamoq (‘to tear out’). The occasional effect does not lie in yurak alone, since its figurative emotional use is conventional. Rather, it emerges from the combination of the emotional heart with radical bodily destruction. The resulting model is EMOTIONAL PAIN IS PHYSICAL INJURY.

4.2. Mirzo Kenjabek’s “Jazo”: nature, memory, contact, and regret

In “Jimjit yig‘layotgan majnuntollar” (‘silent weeping willows’), the human action of crying is attributed to the natural environment. The construction becomes especially expressive because jimjit (‘silent’) conflicts with the expected auditory dimension of crying. The resulting image can be interpreted as SILENT CRYING → UNEXPRESSED SUFFERING. Nature functions as an external representation of the speaker’s internal emotional state.

The expression “Sening qalbingda ... O‘zimning... qarovsiz qolgan... qabrim bor” (‘there is my neglected grave in your heart’) produces a more complex semantic transfer. Qabr (‘grave’) denotes a physical burial place, but it is placed inside qalb (‘heart’), which is conceptualized as psychological space. The mapping is therefore PHYSICAL SPACE → PSYCHOLOGICAL SPACE. The neglected grave represents lost attachment and memory, while the heart becomes a container for the traces of a relationship. This construction compresses love, loss, symbolic death, and memory into a single image.

The lines “Sen meni sezmayсан, payqamayсан hech, / Qo‘llarim qo‘lingga ketsa ham tegib...” contrast physical contact with emotional recognition. Tegmoq (‘to touch’) retains its physical meaning, but the context establishes that touching does not produce psychological connection. The semantic effect arises from contextual opposition: PHYSICAL CONTACT ≠ EMOTIONAL CONTACT.

The expression “Tirik o‘kinchlardan yongan qalbim bor” (‘I have a heart burning from living regrets’) uses physical heat to structure emotional intensity. Yongan qalb (‘burning heart’) maps heat onto psychological suffering, while tirik o‘kinchlar (‘living regrets’) personifies an abstract emotional state. The construction therefore combines embodied metaphor with personification.

4.3. Comparative cognitive patterns

Across the two poets, the analyzed expressions demonstrate that semantic occasionality is produced by more than one mechanism. Five recurrent patterns can be identified: (1) paradoxical conceptualization, as in love directed toward death; (2) metaphorical transfer, as in carrying death as a burden; (3) embodied conceptualization, as in thirst, heat, and bodily injury; (4) domain transfer, as in characterizing a person as a spring; and (5) personification and spatial transfer, as in weeping willows and a grave located in the heart.

These patterns share a common structure: a conventional lexical resource is placed in an unexpected semantic relation, the poetic context supplies the interpretation, and the resulting meaning contributes to an intensified representation of subjective experience. The important point is that formal stability does not exclude semantic innovation. A word may remain morphologically identical while its conceptual role is substantially reorganized.

The distinction between conventional metaphor and semantic occasional derivation is therefore a matter of degree and contextual dependence. Expressions with highly conventional mappings should not automatically be classified as occasionalisms. The strongest candidates are constructions whose interpretation depends on the specific poem and whose semantic relation is difficult to reconstruct without the surrounding context.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF POETIC LEXICAL CREATIVITY

The findings have implications for the description of poetic lexical creativity in Uzbek. First, lexical innovation should not be restricted to formally new words. Semantic restructuring of an existing lexical item can also produce a locally innovative unit of meaning. Second, cognitive analysis makes it possible to explain why particular innovations are interpretable: poets recruit embodied and culturally accessible domains to conceptualize less tangible experiences.

Third, occasionality should be treated as a contextual property rather than a synonym for poeticity or metaphor. This distinction is methodologically important because it prevents the analysis from inflating the number of occasionalisms by including every figurative expression. The selected examples show that the most productive cases are those in which a conventional lexical item enters an unusual semantic relation and acquires a highly context-dependent interpretation.

From this perspective, semantic occasional derivation can be represented as: CONVENTIONAL LEXICAL RESOURCE → CONTEXTUAL RECONCEPTUALIZATION → SEMANTIC INNOVATION → POETIC INTERPRETATION. The process connects lexical semantics with conceptualization and explains how individual poetic experience can be encoded without obligatory morphological change.

6. CONCLUSION

The study has examined semantic occasional derivation in selected Uzbek poetic passages by Zebo Mirzo and Mirzo Kenjabek. The analysis demonstrates that poetic semantic innovation may occur without the creation of a new lexical form. Instead, an existing word can acquire an individualized interpretation through contextual reconceptualization.

The principal mechanisms identified are paradoxical conceptualization, metaphorical transfer, embodied experience, domain transfer, personification, and contextual semantic extension. The examples show how physical burden, thirst, taste, bodily injury, natural objects, and burial space can structure abstract experiences of love, suffering, longing, memory, and emotional alienation. The central theoretical implication is that semantic occasional derivation should be distinguished from both morphological nonce formation and conventional metaphor. Its defining feature is the interaction of an established lexical resource with a strongly context-dependent and individually motivated conceptual configuration. Further research should test the proposed distinction on a larger corpus of contemporary Uzbek poetry and combine qualitative interpretation with corpus-based evidence of distribution and recurrence.

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