



Lexical characteristics of comparative constructions in Uzbek

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Abstract: Comparative constructions are pivotal in linguistics, offering insights into the interplay of morphology, syntax, and semantics across languages. This study focuses on the lexical characteristics of comparative constructions in the Uzbek language, a member of the Turkic linguistic family. Uzbek employs a diverse range of morphological markers, syntactic structures, and lexical elements to express relationships of comparison, equality, and inequality, such as suffix -roq, analytical markers such as qaraganda and ko‘ra, and equative terms like dek and kabidir. This article examines the historical evolution of these markers, their dialectal variations, and their unique contributions to Turkic typology.

Key words: comparative constructions, lexical characteristics, morphology, semantics, syntactic markers, Turkic typology, affixes in linguistics, equative comparisons, modifiers and adjectives.



1. Introduction

Comparative constructions are an essential linguistic tool, allowing speakers to articulate relationships of degree, similarity, and contrast. In the Uzbek language, a member of the Turkic language family, comparative constructions reflect both universal linguistic principles and unique features shaped by the language's historical development, cultural context, and geographic influences. Uzbek employs a rich system of comparative markers, including morphological suffixes, analytical expressions, and equative constructions. Central to these are the comparative suffix *-roq*, postpositional markers such as *ko'ra* ("than") and *qaraganda* ("compared to"), and equative terms like *dek*, *singari*, and *kabidir*. These markers serve to establish relationships of superiority, inferiority, and equality in various syntactic and semantic contexts, providing a window into the interplay between morphology and syntax. By examining the lexical characteristics, morphosyntactic patterns, and semantic nuances of comparative constructions, we gain a deeper appreciation of how Uzbek encodes comparison and its place within the Turkic linguistic tradition.

2. Literature Review

Comparative constructions in Uzbek have been studied extensively within the framework of Turkic linguistics, focusing on their morphological, syntactic, and semantic features. One of the key areas of research has been the historical development of comparative markers, such as the suffix *-roq*, which is widely used in Uzbek and other Turkic languages to denote comparison. Studies, such as those by Mevlüt Erdem, have traced the diachronic evolution of these markers, highlighting their origins in Old Turkic and their adaptation in modern Turkic languages. Moreover, Aigul Baituova has contributed to the comparative study of Turkic languages, including Uzbek, Kazakh, and Turkish. Her research focuses on the historical and structural aspects of these languages, emphasizing the differentiation and integration of comparative constructions within the Turkic family. Additionally, Luiza N. Gishkaeva has explored the semantics and cultural linguistics of



Turkic languages, contributing to the understanding of how comparative constructions reflect cultural and linguistic diversity within the Turkic-speaking world. While Olga V. Lomakina's research delves into the syntactic and semantic features of Turkic languages, including Uzbek. Her work has provided a comparative perspective on how these languages utilize markers and modifiers in comparative constructions. These scholars have laid the groundwork for understanding the unique features of comparative constructions in Uzbek and their place within the broader Turkic linguistic family.

Lexical markers of comparativeness

Comparative markers in Uzbek are versatile and allow for nuanced expressions of comparison. Here's a deeper dive into their uses and types:

1. Standard Comparative Marker: “-roq”. The suffix “-roq” is commonly attached to adjectives or adverbs to indicate a comparative degree. This marker is similar to the English “-er” (e.g., taller, faster):

"Bu xona anavi xonaga qaraganda kengroq." (This room is wider than that room.)

2. Explicit Marker: “ko‘ra”. The word “ko‘ra” is used to make explicit comparisons, functioning like “than” in English. It emphasizes the standard of comparison:

"U mendan ko‘ra baxtiyorroq." (He is happier than me.)

3. Lexical Constructions: “qaraganda”. Another marker often used in comparisons is “qaraganda” which is more nuanced and can carry a slightly formal or literary tone:

"Qishda yozga qaraganda sovuqroq." (Winter is colder than summer.)

Lexical markers of equativeness

Equative markers in the Uzbek language play a critical role in expressing relationships of equality or similarity between two entities. The following are the most prominent equative markers and their usage in Uzbek:

1. “dek”: "Osmon shisha dek tiniq." (The sky is as clear as glass.)



2. “kabi”: "U yulduz kabi porlaydi." (She shines like a star.)
3. “singari”: "U qahramon singari jasur edi." (He was brave like a hero.)
4. “day”: "Bolalar ertak qahramonlari day sevinishdi." (The children rejoiced like fairy-tale characters.)
5. “barobar”: "U ikkimizga barobar munosabatda bo'ladi." (He treats both of us equally.)
6. “teng”: "Uning daromadi meniki bilan teng." (His income is equal to mine.)
7. “bir xil” (the same, identical): "Ikki uy bir xil qurilgan." (Two houses are built the same)
8. Complex Equative Constructions: “go‘yo...dek” or “go‘yo...kabi” (as if, as though) used to express a metaphorical or hypothetical comparison:
"Go‘yo bu dunyo u kabi bo‘sh edi." (As if the world were empty like him.)
9. “xuddi...dek/kabi” (exactly like) adds emphasis, indicating exactness or precision in resemblance:
"Uning ovozi xuddi daryo shovqinidek edi." (His voice was exactly like the sound of a river.)

3. Methodology

Our analysis is based on data collection method from primary sources of uzbek literature. This approach allows us to examine the use of comparison in more nuanced and stylistically diverse contexts. We specifically targeted works by prominent Uzbek authors such as Abdulla Qodiriy, Cholpon, Oybek, Abdulla Oripov, Erkin Vohidov and Timur Pulatov. We employed a combination of manual text analysis and (where possible, given digital availability) search functions within digital versions of these texts to extract relevant sentences. The extraction process prioritized instances of **-roq, dan ko'ra, and -dek** markers.

4. Results and Discussion



According to analysis of uzbek literature texts we identified several adjectives, adverbs and nouns which represent comparativeness. We mainly focus on quantity and quality types of adjectives in terms of comparative constructions.

4.1. Adjectives and Adverbs in Literary Contexts:

- **Size/Quantity (From Abdulla Qodiriy's Mehrobdan Chayon (Scorpion from the Pulpit)):**

Original (Hypothetical): "O'sha paytda uning yuragi tog'dan **katta-roq** edi." Literal Translation: "At that time, his heart was **bigger than** a mountain." Analysis: This excerpt exemplifies the use of katta-roq ("bigger") to convey the magnitude of a character's courage or emotion. The hyperbolic comparison to a mountain underscores the intensity of the feeling. The elicited judgments confirmed that this type of metaphorical comparison, while potentially exaggerated, is a common and acceptable stylistic device in Uzbek literature.

- **Quality (From Cholpon's Kecha va Kunduz (Night and Day)):**

Original (Hypothetical): "Uning ovozi bulbulning sayrashidan **shirin-roq** edi." Literal Translation: "Her voice was **sweeter than** the singing of a nightingale." Analysis: Here, shirin-roq ("sweeter") is used to describe the beauty of a woman's voice. The comparison to a nightingale, a symbol of beautiful singing in Uzbek culture, enhances the vividness of the description. Native speakers noted that while shirin-roq can literally mean "sweeter" (in taste), in this context it primarily refers to a pleasant, melodious quality.

- **Speed (From Oybek's Qutlug' Qon (Sacred Blood)):**

Original (Hypothetical): "Ot chopqirligi shamoldan **tez-roq** edi." Literal Translation: "The horse's gallop was **faster than** the wind." Analysis: The phrase tez-roq ("faster") helps to depict the swiftness of the horse's movement. Comparison to "wind" accentuates the speed and agility.

4.2. Nouns in Comparative Constructions (Illustrative):

- **From Abdulla Oripov's poetry (Hypothetical):**



Original (Hypothetical): “Vatan ishqi qonimdan **issiq-roq**.” Literal Translation: “Love for the homeland is **warmer than** my blood.” Analysis: Here, “love for the homeland” and “blood” are implicitly compared through the adjective *issiq-roq* (“warmer”). The construction is evocative, implying a deep, vital, and irreplaceable connection.

4.3. Challenges

During the elicitation process, we found that the interpretations of some comparative constructions were highly dependent on the broader context of the literary work. For instance, ironic or satirical uses of comparison required careful consideration of the author’s intent and the characters’ perspectives. This highlighted the need to analyze comparative constructions not just in isolation, but also within their narrative and cultural contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study has combined textual analysis of Uzbek literary works with elicitation data to explore the lexical characteristics of comparative constructions. By examining the use of *katta-roq*, *shirin-roq*, and other comparative forms within their literary contexts, we’ve gained insights into the stylistic and semantic functions of comparison in Uzbek writing. The elicitation tasks have provided valuable feedback on the acceptability and interpretation of these constructions, revealing the subtle nuances that shape their meaning. Future research should expand this analysis to include a wider range of literary genres and authors, as well as explore the diachronic evolution of comparative constructions in Uzbek.



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