Latin American Journal of Education
www.lajoe.org

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL MEANS EXPRESSING DISCRIMINATION IN THE KOREAN AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24297025

Durdona A'zamova
1st-year Master's Student in Linguistics
Scientific Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. **Abbasova D. K.**, *PhD in Philological Sciences*
Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies
Republic of Uzbekistan
durdonaazamova8@gmail.com

Abstract. *This article analyzes the semantic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic features of lexical units expressing humiliation and discrimination in the Korean language. The linguistic manifestation of societal factors—such as social stratification, gender inequality, age hierarchies, and racial relations—is elucidated through words and expressions carrying discriminatory meanings. Furthermore, the study examines newly emerging neologisms in modern Korean and the social impact of pejorative vocabulary in communication. The research findings hold practical value for Korean lexicology, sociolinguistics, and intercultural communication.*

Keywords: *Korean language, discriminatory vocabulary, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, gender discrimination, social stratification, neologisms, discrimination.*

Research objectives and task. The main objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the semantic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic features of lexical units conveying discrimination and degradation in the Korean language, as well as to uncover their sources of origin and connection to socio-cultural factors in society. Based on this objective, the following tasks are established: To isolate and systematize lexical and phraseological units constituting discriminatory and pejorative semantics in Korean (categorized by gender, age, social status, and racial factors).To analyze the semantic structure, semantic field, and linguistic expression mechanisms of pejorative vocabulary. To determine the impact of social stratification, traditional and modern values, and social transformations in Korean society on the formation of discriminatory vocabulary. To examine newly emerging discriminatory neologisms and stereotypes in modern Korean (specifically within internet discourse and youth slang). To substantiate the contextual application of these lexical means during communication and their pragmatic effect on interpersonal and intergroup relations.

Research methodology. This research employs an integrated set of

Latin American Journal of Education
www.lajoe.org

scientific methodology to thoroughly reveal the semantic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic nature of lexical units expressing discrimination and degradation in the Korean language. The descriptive method plays a leading role in isolating lexical and phraseological units with discriminatory semantics, as well as describing their practical usage and dictionary definitions. The internal semantic structure of lexical units, the mechanisms of negative connotation formation, and the composition of semantic semes are identified through semantic and componential analysis. To examine the correlation of discriminatory vocabulary with social stratification, age, gender, social status, and ethnic factors, the sociolinguistic analysis method is utilized. Concurrently, the pragmalinguistic analysis method is applied to elucidate the contextual meaning of lexical units, the social distance between speaker and listener, and the speech-impact properties of pejorative expressions. The contextual and conceptual analysis method is essential for uncovering real contextual meanings within literary texts, internet discourse, and oral communication, as well as identifying discrimination-related concepts in Korean linguoculture. The systematization and grouping of collected lexical materials according to established criteria (gender, social, age discrimination, and neologisms) are carried out using classification and taxonomic methods. The methodological and theoretical framework of the research relies on the theoretical views on discourse analysis and social inequality in language advanced by leading scholars in sociolinguistics, linguoculturology, and descriptive and pragmatic lexicology.

Introduction. The intrinsic connection between language and society is one of the most relevant and rapidly developing domains of sociolinguistics. Language serves not only as a tool for communication and information exchange among humans but also as a mirror reflecting the social structure, cultural values, social perspectives, and inequalities present within a given society. The language of every nation embeds the social relationships formed during its historical development. As the renowned linguist A. A. Kholodovich noted: "The language system inevitably encodes real social relations and class differences of a society at its grammatical and lexical levels"[37]. This phenomenon is vividly expressed in the lexical units signifying discrimination in Korean and Uzbek. In Korean, social stratification, gender concepts, age hierarchies, and ethnic relations find various lexical-semantic and pragmatic expressions. In this process, investigating lexical units that serve to demean human dignity or portray gender, age, social status, and other personal attributes in a pejorative manner plays a

[37] Kholodovich, A. A. (1979). Problems of Grammatical Theory [Problemy grammaticheskoy teorii]. Leningrad: Nauka. 304 p.

Latin American Journal of Education
www.lajoe.org

key role in understanding the reality of the linguocultural environment. In Korean linguistics, human degradation and insult are primarily investigated under the terms 차별 표현 (chabel pyohyeon — discriminatory expressions) and 비하 (biha — disparagement/derogation). Historically established social stratification and Confucian norms in Eastern linguocultures, particularly in Korean society, created a strict social distance in language. According to the theoretical insights of Prof. Yu. N. Mazur, the system of address and designation in Korean clearly defines relationships of subordination and stratification between individuals.[38] Korean society was traditionally shaped by Confucian teachings and strict hierarchical values, which are explicitly manifested in categorical honorific forms and communicative etiquette. However, by the 21st century, under the influence of globalization, rapid technological progress, and swift social transformations, the forms and scope of lexical units expressing discrimination and stereotypes in language have changed significantly. In modern Korean—especially within internet discourse, social networks, and youth speech—new neologisms and derogatory slang are becoming instruments for establishing boundaries between social groups and, at times, deepening conflicts. Gender-based discrimination (e.g., expressions with negative connotations toward women or men), age discrimination (vocabulary demeaning the elderly or youth), and words expressing socio-economic inequality are prominent examples of this trend. Gustaf Stern, a Swedish-English linguist and specialist in semasiology, was among the first scholars to classify semantic changes in language. He viewed the process of pejoration not as a random linguistic accident, but as the result of psychological and subjective evaluations by language users. As Stern stated: "Words acquire a negative color (pejoration) when a speaker subjectively deems a certain quality of an object negative or worthy of contempt in speech, and this evaluation becomes consolidated in the language"[39]. While in Korean linguistics the concept of humiliation is studied under the term 비하 (biha), in Uzbek linguistics and culture this phenomenon manifests through concepts such as kamsitish (discrimination), tahqirlash (humiliation), yerga urish (degradation), and mensimaslik (disregard), as well as pejorative lexical-semantic layers and phraseological units. In Eastern linguocultures, including Korean and Uzbek societies, historical social stratification and patriarchal relations have left a deep mark on language. While Korean used units like 종 (jong — slave/servant) to demean lower

[38] Mazur, Yu. N. (1960). Grammar of the Korean Language [Grammatika koreyskogo yazyka]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya.

[39] Stern, G. (1931). Meaning and Change of Meaning: With Special Reference to the English Language. Gothenburg: Göteborgs Högskolas Årsskrift, pp. 162–165.

Latin American Journal of Education
www.lajoe.org

classes or 벙어리 (beongeori — mute) to emphasize physical disabilities, Uzbek classical and realist literature (for instance, Oybek's novel Qutlug‘ qon) broadly used lexical units such as qul (slave), julxun (ragged), malay (servant), and g‘arib (destitute) to diminish the personality of lower-class members. Furthermore, terms for physical disabilities in both languages (such as mute, deaf, speech-impaired) carry a derogatory coloring reflecting an individual's lack of rights and helplessness in society rather than merely a biological condition. Beyond lexical tools, discrimination also emerges at grammatical and pragmatic levels. Just as the violation of honorific speech levels (해라체 or inappropriate 반말) and pejorative suffixes (-쟁이, -질) act as tools of pragmatic pressure in Korean, the unwarranted use of informal address (senlash), harsh imperative verb forms (-g‘il, -gin), and disdainful tones by higher social strata toward lower classes in Uzbek culture serve as linguistic weapons reinforcing social inequality. As Korean linguist Lee Jeong-bok (이정복) emphasizes in his research on discriminatory vocabulary in dictionaries and paremiological units, discriminatory expressions and neologisms serve as linguistic tools to maintain and reinforce social inequality.[40] From this perspective, a comprehensive semantic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic investigation of lexical means expressing discrimination in Korean holds high scientific relevance. This study aims to provide a detailed analysis of the underlying causes, semantic structures, contexts of usage in communication, and social impacts of pejorative lexical and phraseological units in modern Korean society. The research results serve to enrich Korean lexicology, sociolinguistics, and linguoculturology with new theoretical and practical insights.

Main part. As scholar Lucian Brown, a researcher in Korean pragmatics and sociolinguistics, noted: "In Korean, waiving politeness forms or employing derogatory units is a linguistic strategy aimed at asserting dominance within the social hierarchy."[41] In Korean, words associated with demeaning and looking down on an individual constitute a specialized semantic group, often emerging under historical and social conditions. Uzbek similarly possesses lexical units that damage personal honor and dignity or demean an individual's social standing or physical state. These lexical means can be categorized into the following primary directions:

1. Physical Disabilities and Their Transformation into Tools of Discrimination

Hasanova Mashkhura Norkulovna, a prominent scholar of Uzbek Koreanistics and researcher in Korean lexicology and

[40] Lee, Jeong-bok. (2017). Analysis of the Actual Condition of Discrimination Expressions Description in Korean Dictionaries [Guk-eosajeon-ui chabel pyohyeon gisul siltae bunseok].

[41] Brown, L. (2011). Korean Honorifics and Politeness in Action. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Latin American Journal of Education
www.lajoe.org

intercultural communication, studied the translation equivalence of negative-connotation Korean vocabulary into Uzbek and noted: "When translating discriminatory (biha) words from Korean into Uzbek, providing mere literal meaning is insufficient preserving the cultural-historical connotation and expressive coloring of each word is essential."[42] In Korean, words denoting physiological defects (e.g., 벙어리 — beongeori / mute) express not just a medical condition, but an individual's disenfranchisement within society. Ross King, a leading Western Koreanist and sociolinguist who examined speech levels and honorifics/pejoratives in social discourse, reflected this in the following premise: "The breakdown of speech levels and negative lexical suffixes in Korean serve as primary pragmatic tools for establishing social and psychological dominance over an interlocutor."[43] In Uzbek: Words like soqov (mute) and gung (deaf) can acquire negative connotative meanings in context or discourse, performing a discriminatory function beyond describing physical conditions.

2. Socio-Class Discriminatory Vocabulary in Korean: Units linked to feudal relations, such as 종 (jong — slave/servant).

In Uzbek: Historical-lexical layers used against lower-class representatives, such as qul (slave) and malay (servant).

3. Forms of Communication and Pragmatic Discrimination

In Uzbek: The use of harsh imperative forms and informal address (senlash) to disregard or demean an interlocutor generates linguistic-pragmatic discrimination. In Uzbek culture, respect, modesty, honoring elders, and showing compassion to youngsters are core values. Consequently, discriminatory lexical means are frequently connected to actions or deviations from social norms that contradict these values. From a linguocultural standpoint, discriminatory lexical means can be classified into the following groups: By intellectual ability: noqobil (incapable), nodon (ignorant), tentak (fool), go‘l (gullible), lallaygan (sluggish).By physical appearance: chula (maimed), cho‘loq (lame), g‘ilay (cross-eyed), pes (vitiligo-afflicted), kal (bald), surbet (impudent).In traditional Uzbek society, using direct negative words toward individuals with physical or mental disabilities was considered impolite; hence, the use of euphemisms (ko‘zi ojiz / visually impaired, imkoniyati cheklangan / person with disability) over dysphemisms is preferred in speech. Gender discrimination is one of the most widely reflected aspects in linguistic tools, primarily tied to women's social roles and marital status: Qari qiz (old maid — applied to older unmarried women). Javrasa (scold), juvon (young woman - in derogatory contexts), beva-bechora (poor

[42] Khasanova, M. N. (2015). Comparative Lexicology of Korean and Uzbek Languages. Tashkent: Fan Publishing House.

[43] King, R. Language, Politics, and Ideology in the Two Koreas. — University of Hawaii Press, 1996.

Latin American Journal of Education
www.lajoe.org

widow), tul (widow/er). Erkaksifat (manly female), xotinboz (womanizer), xotinbochar (henpecked/divorced man).Because the family institution is highly valued in Uzbek society, language tools reflect social pressure toward unmarried or divorced individuals. Expressions targeting regional or social origins include: qishloqi (provincial/rustic), to‘pori (uncouth), savodsiz (illiterate), gadoy (beggar), xaloyiq (mob), malay (labourer/servant). Muhabbat Sodiqova, a prominent linguist in Uzbek lexicology and semantics, investigated the laws governing the formation of derogatory and negative-connotation lexical layers in Uzbek. In her research, she stated: "Lexical units conveying discrimination and degradation in Uzbek carry emotional-expressive coloring that exaggerates a person's social vulnerability, physical defect, or economic dependence."[44] An analysis of discriminatory vocabulary in Uzbek demonstrates that this phenomenon is structured through complex and systematic means across all language tiers—lexical-semantic, phraseological, grammatical, and pragmatic. While zoosemic and phyto-metaphors exaggerating human physical or mental flaws reflect national lifestyles and observational experiences, dysphemisms and pejorative affixes serve to overtly express a speaker's subjective negative attitude.

Table 1.

Mechanism	Examples	Linguocultural Commentary
Zoosemic Metaphors	Eshak (donkey), kalxat (vulture), sig‘ir (cow), to‘ng‘iz (swine), mol (cattle)	Demean human qualities through animal traits (e.g., stubbornness or ignorance).
Irony and Phraseological Expressions	Boshi bo‘sh (empty-headed), og‘zi shaloq (foul-mouthed), burni ko‘tarilgan (arrogant)	Exposing moral-ethical shortcomings via fixed expressions.
Pejorative Affixes	-roq, -gina, -cha (in specific contexts)	Imparting a derogatory or dismissive shade to a word (e.g., o‘qimishlicha / pseudo-educated).

Concurrently, paremiological units (idioms and proverbs) and contextual irony serve as linguocultural methods to reduce personal dignity through subtle irony or emotional impact, avoiding open conflict typical of Uzbek speech etiquette. These expressive modes of discrimination are closely bound to traditional stereotypes and social control mechanisms that operated over centuries. A deep understanding of these linguistic traits plays a vital role in employing appropriate euphemisms in speech culture and fostering a communicative environment grounded in mutual respect.

[44] Sodiqova, M. (2009). Semantic and Connotative Analysis of Words in the Uzbek Language [O‘zbek tilida so‘zlarning semantik va konnotativ tahlili]. Tashkent: Fan Publishing House.

Latin American Journal of Education
www.lajoe.org

Conclusion. A linguocultural analysis of lexical means expressing discrimination and pejorative meanings in Uzbek demonstrates that negatively charged words are not mere emotional outbursts, but complex phenomena intrinsically linked to historical-social experience, ethical norms, and cultural taboos.First, a substantial portion of discriminatory vocabulary in Uzbek developed as a tool of social control and punishment for actions violating dominant moral standards (collectivism, respect for elders, family stability, modesty). Pejoratives applied to individuals deviating from collective norms functioned as self-regulating mechanisms within society.Second, zoosemic metaphors utilized to demean individuals in Uzbek linguoculture are directly tied to traditional agricultural and pastoral lifestyles. Through these means, mental limitations, stubbornness, or laziness are symbolically equated with animal traits, elevating the degree of negative assessment. Third, in today's global information space and human-rights-oriented society, attitudes toward discriminatory language are undergoing a fundamental transformation. Many derogatory expressions previously accepted as natural in everyday conversation (particularly regarding physical abilities or gender status) are now evaluated as contrary to ethical standards and human dignity. This necessitates accelerating the processes of euphemization and political correctness in language. Overall, studying and neutralizing discriminatory tools in language is a vital factor not only for linguistics, but also for raising society's moral-ethical standards. Correct usage of euphemisms in speech culture and preventing discriminatory vocabulary in media and education will elevate the national-cultural prestige of the language.

REFERENCES:

1. Kholodovich, A. A. (1979). Problems of Grammatical Theory [Problemy grammaticheskoy teorii]. Leningrad: Nauka. 304 p.

2. Mazur, Yu. N. (1960). Grammar of the Korean Language [Grammatika koreyskogo yazyka]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya.

3. Stern, G. (1931). Meaning and Change of Meaning: With Special Reference to the English Language. Gothenburg: Göteborgs Högskolas Årsskrift, pp. 162–165.

4. Lee, Jeong-bok. (2017). Analysis of the Actual Condition of Discrimination Expressions Description in Korean Dictionaries [Guk-eosajeon-ui chabel pyohyeon gisul siltae bunseok].

5. Brown, L. (2011). Korean Honorifics and Politeness in Action. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Latin American Journal of Education
www.lajoe.org

6. King, R. Language, Politics, and Ideology in the Two Koreas. — University of Hawaii Press, 1996.

7. Khasanova, M. N. (2015). Comparative Lexicology of Korean and Uzbek Languages. Tashkent: Fan Publishing House.

8. Sodiqova, M. (2009). Semantic and Connotative Analysis of Words in the Uzbek Language [O‘zbek tilida so‘zlarning semantik va konnotativ tahlili]. Tashkent: Fan Publishing House.