



THE SEMANTIC LOAD ON WORDS IN THE TURKMEN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

In the Turkmen language, words are not only used in their literal meanings but also serve as carriers of various layers of meaning and interpretation. This phenomenon is closely linked to the frequent use of metaphors, metonymy, synecdoche, stylistic deviations, and idiomatic expressions. This article analyzes how semantic layers are embedded into words, how they shift depending on context, and what role these shifts play in Turkmen linguistic structure. Examples from the language are provided to illustrate how meaning is enhanced and deepened in different communicative settings.

Keywords: Turkmen language, lexicon, semantics, semantic load, stylistics, metaphor, idiom, context

Introduction

The Turkmen language, having developed through centuries of rich historical and cultural evolution, has formed a comprehensive lexical and semantic system. Language is not merely a communication tool but also a reflection of a nation's worldview, mindset, culture, and cognitive framework. In Turkmen, words do not always function within their basic literal meanings; instead, they often convey layered interpretations and emotions, demonstrating the depth of stylistic and semantic expression within the language. The phenomenon of semantic load—how words carry meanings beyond the literal—is largely shaped by context. Depending on the situation, a word may shift from its primary meaning to express emotions, figurative ideas, or symbolic messages. This feature is widely observed both in everyday speech and in literary works. Understanding this dynamic is essential not only for linguistic analysis but also for cultural, psychological, and sociolinguistic perspectives.

This article examines the types of semantic load found in the Turkmen language, the linguistic tools used to achieve them, and their significance in both spoken and literary forms of communication.

1. Types of Semantic Load

Words in Turkmen often carry meanings beyond their direct definitions. This is especially true in the case of stylistic and rhetorical devices. Common forms of semantic extension include:

Metaphor (meaning by resemblance): One object or phenomenon is described through the characteristics of another. Example: “He was fierce like a tiger” – here, “tiger” is metaphorically used to describe someone’s fierceness.

Metonymy (meaning by association): A concept is expressed not directly but through something closely associated with it. Example: “He spoke from the throne” – “throne” refers to authority or leadership.

Synecdoche (part-whole substitution): Either a part represents the whole or vice versa. Example: “All eyes were on us” – “eyes” stands in for people.

Idiomatic expressions: The Turkmen language has a wealth of idioms that carry rich figurative meaning. Examples include “Serve like a slave”, “Heartbroken”, “Fire coming from one’s mouth” – these are not literal but symbolic or emotional expressions.

2. Contextual Meaning Shifts

In Turkmen, as in many natural languages, context plays a decisive role in how a word is interpreted. A single word can convey multiple meanings depending on the situation, tone, surrounding words, and speaker intent. These shifts are not always predictable from the word alone, making context essential for accurate comprehension.

For example, the word “ýürek” (heart) in Turkmen can mean the physical organ, but depending on context, it can also symbolize courage, emotion, empathy, or even sorrow. In a phrase like “ýüregi ýarylmak” (“his/her heart broke”), the meaning shifts from the physical to emotional pain. Similarly, “agzyndan ot çykdy” (literally: “fire came from his mouth”) does not describe a literal event but rather someone speaking angrily or furiously. These examples show how Turkmen uses metaphorical language heavily and how meaning is determined more by communicative context than by dictionary definitions. This linguistic richness requires speakers and listeners to share cultural and social understandings to correctly interpret intended meanings.

3. Stylistic Features

Stylistics in the Turkmen language contributes greatly to the semantic loading of words. Writers and speakers use stylistic devices to emphasize certain ideas, express emotions, and convey layered meanings. The most commonly employed stylistic features include: **Hyperbole:** Exaggeration for emphasis. E.g., “I cried a river” (figuratively emphasizing extreme sadness).

Irony: Saying the opposite of what is meant to create humor or criticism.

Euphemism: Using milder expressions to replace harsher or unpleasant ones.

Repetition: To emphasize or intensify emotional tone.

Parallelism: Using structurally similar phrases to enhance rhythm and meaning.

In Turkmen literature and oral tradition, such as dessan (epic poems), proverbs, and folk tales, these stylistic tools are used masterfully to enrich meaning and resonate with the audience’s values and imagination.

4. Examples and Explanation

Let us consider a few idiomatic and metaphorical expressions in Turkmen and explore how their meanings transcend literal interpretation:

“Başy göge ýetdi” – Literally “his head reached the sky” – This means someone became proud or arrogant. “Göwni ýumşady” – “His soul softened” – This implies the person became sympathetic or forgiving. “Gözi doýmaýar” – “His eye does not get full” – Refers to greed or insatiability. These expressions show how a simple sentence can carry cultural connotations, emotional tones, and metaphorical depth, making Turkmen a highly expressive and nuanced language.

Conclusion

The semantic richness of the Turkmen language is deeply embedded in its capacity to load words with multiple layers of meaning. Whether through metaphor, idiom, context, or stylistic devices, Turkmen allows speakers to express not only ideas but emotions, attitudes, and cultural values. Understanding how meaning is dynamically constructed in speech and writing provides valuable insights not only for linguists but also for cultural scholars, translators, and educators.

Semantic load is not a marginal aspect of the language — it is central to how Turkmen people think, feel, and communicate. Future research may further explore how these features compare with those in other Turkic languages and how they evolve in contemporary digital communication.

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