



LEXICAL SYNONYMY OF BODY-PART TERMS IN UZBEK AND TURKISH LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to a comparative analysis of the lexical-semantic features of somatic synonyms in Uzbek and Turkish languages. Words related to body parts have existed in both languages since ancient times and form a broad semantic network. The article investigates the synonymous variants of these units based on phonetic, semantic, and historical criteria. Using data from ancient Turkic written monuments, modern dictionaries, and corpus materials, the formation, functions, and stylistic differences of somatic synonyms are analyzed. Additionally, similarities and differences between synonymous units in Turkish and their equivalents in Uzbek are identified. The study aims to determine the semantic relationships, lexical system positions, and historical roots of somatic synonyms in Uzbek and Turkish. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the development of vocabulary in Turkic languages.

Introduction. The phenomenon of synonymy reflects semantic commonality and proximity in a language system, enabling mutual substitution between closely related lexical units. It is one of the key indicators of lexical richness and stylistic diversity in a language. Especially within the lexicon of body part names, the presence of synonymic groups broadens the semantic and stylistic capacities of the language.

Linguist H. Jamolkhonov explains synonymy as follows: "Lexical synonymy is the grouping of lexemes based on their identical or similar meanings" [Jamolkhonov, 2005:166]. Similarly, M. Mirtojiyev emphasizes that genuine semantic closeness is a prerequisite for synonymy, stating: "For more than one word to be considered synonyms, they must express identical or closely related meanings from a semantic standpoint" [Mirtojiyev, 2010:44].

Based on these viewpoints, it can be concluded that the core features of synonymy include semantic similarity, proximity, and functional equivalence. The relationship between synonyms arises from their meaning-related closeness, which serves as the primary criterion in forming synonymic connections.

According to linguist M. Hakimova, "All lexical units in a synonymic row designate the same denotatum or concept, yet their naming may differ in terms of connotation, stylistic nuances, and temporal relevance" [Hakimova, 2025:96]. From this, we can infer that although synonymous units refer to the same object semantically, they differ in expressive style,



emotional-evaluative value, and usage context. Therefore, synonymy requires both denotative and connotative analysis.

Analyzing the complexity of synonymy, M. Hakimova further writes: “Synonymy is the relationship between lexemes that are formally different but convey the same concept with various shades and nuances of meaning” [Hakimova, 2025:96]. According to this view, even if synonymous lexemes share the same denotative meaning, they can differ in connotative intensity, stylistic specificity, field of application, and combinability.

Thus, the phenomenon of synonymy manifests not only through semantic proximity but also as a multifaceted lexical occurrence that reflects the stylistic and cognitive capacities of language. As emphasized by linguist Hakimova, the factors contributing to the formation of synonymy can be grouped into several categories. Specifically, both linguistic (semantic, morphological, phonetic) and extralinguistic (social, historical, stylistic) factors play a direct role in the development of synonymous layers. Hakimova identifies ten key factors that give rise to synonymy [Hakimova, 2025:97]. The factors that contribute to synonymy in the Uzbek language, illustrated through the example of body part terms, can be summarized in the following table:

No	Factor Contributing to Synonymy	Scientific Description	Examples
1	Social stratification of speakers	Vocabulary specific to profession, age, gender, and social class leads to the formation of synonymous series.	<i>appendiks – ko’richak; vena and aorta – tomir; ilik – qizil suyak ko’migi; oshiq-moshiq</i> (joint of two bones) – <i>suyak bo’g’imi</i> ; examples of common vs. medical terminology.
2	Influence of dialects and regional variants	Regional dialectal variants contribute to the emergence of synonymous forms.	The literary term <i>son</i> (upper part of the leg) appears as <i>surun</i> , <i>tizzaliq</i> in some regions; <i>yelka</i> as <i>shona</i> , <i>taxtipisht</i> in Bukhara dialect.
3	Temporal factor	Coexistence of archaic and modern lexemes generates synonymic pairs.	<i>Uzor/oraz – yuz; Abro’ – qosh; Qursoq – oshqozon, qorin; Irin – lab; Adoq – oyoq.</i>
4	Stylistic variation	Lexical units may acquire stylistic coloring and differ in use across functional styles.	<i>Bosh – kalla – sar</i> set: <i>bosh</i> (neutral, literary), <i>kalla</i> (colloquial), <i>sar</i> (poetic, archaic).
5	Language contact	Lexemes borrowed from Arabic, Persian, Russian, or other languages enrich the synonymic system.	<i>Yuz</i> (Turkic), <i>jamol</i> (Arabic), <i>diydor</i> and <i>ruxsor</i> (Persian).
6	Cognitive factor	As conceptual understanding deepens, subtle semantic distinctions lead to new	The synonymous set <i>o’t – zarda – safro</i> initially referred to internal organs, but in traditional medicine, these substances were associated with



		nominations.	emotional states (e.g., anger), thus <i>zarda</i> also became synonymous with <i>jahl</i> .
7	Subjective attitude	Speaker's emotional or evaluative stance toward the referent contributes to synonymy.	Positive connotation: <i>chehra, jamol, diydor, oraz, uzor, ruxsor, tal'at, siymo, istara</i> ; neutral: <i>yuz</i> ; negative: <i>bet, aft, bashara, aft-angor</i> .
8	Word formation	Derivational processes (affixation or compounding) lead to the creation of synonymous variants.	<i>Me'da – oshqozon; Mardum – qorachiq.</i>
9	Polysemy	A single lexeme possessing multiple meanings gives rise to separate synonymic series for each meaning.	—

In Uzbek, the word *yuz* (face), as a body part, possesses polysemous characteristics and is associated with at least 16 synonyms. These synonymous units are used across various social, cultural, and stylistic contexts, as well as in different dialects and regional variants. They serve to describe not only the physical appearance of the face but also its expression, features, and even personal reputation. Synonymous units emerge not only from the necessity of naming objective reality but also from the need for subjective evaluation, emotional expression, and stylistic variation. In such cases, the speaker's attitude toward a phenomenon, person, or object is reflected in the semantics of the lexical item. Consequently, seemingly similar words may differ in connotation—positive, neutral, or negative. This is particularly evident in the lexical field related to somatic vocabulary. Words denoting human body parts or appearance often bear evaluative or emotional connotations.

In Uzbek, the lexeme *yuz* (face) is part of a rich synonymic series that includes the following items: *yuz, bet, aft, bashara, turq, so'xta, aft-angor, chehra, jamol, diydor, oraz, uzor, ruxsor, tal'at, siymo, and istara*. Among these, the units *chehra, jamol, diydor, oraz, uzor, ruxsor, tal'at, siymo, and istara* carry **positive connotations**, often associated with beauty, delicacy, and expressive richness. These lexemes reflect the speaker's **aesthetic perception** of the human face.

The word *yuz*, within this synonymic set, is stylistically **neutral**, bearing a descriptive and objective character without conveying emotional or evaluative nuances.

Conversely, the items *bet, aft, bashara, and aft-angor* possess **negative connotations**, typically expressing meanings such as disgust, anger, disdain, or contempt. These lexemes are often used in derogatory or emotionally charged contexts.

In Turkish, the lexeme *yüz* also has several synonyms, including: *beniz, duluk, didar, sima, çehre, surat, suret, vecih, faça, and bet*. All of these terms refer to the **frontal part of the head** — “*başta, alın, göz, burun, ağız, yanak ve çenenin bulunduğu ön bölüm*” — namely, the facial region where the forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks, and chin are located.

- *Beniz* is borrowed from Arabic and predominantly used in literary and poetic contexts to describe the face's appearance or features.



- *Duluk*, originating from Old Turkic, is rarely used in contemporary Turkish and mostly appears in regional dialects.
- *Didar*, borrowed from Persian, means “face” or “gaze” and is widely used in artistic or poetic speech.
- *Sima*, also from Persian, denotes the facial expression or outer appearance and is commonly used in both formal and literary contexts.
- *Çehre*, another Persian loanword, signifies facial appearance or social prestige and is used in artistic and literary styles.
- *Surat* and *suret*, of Arabic origin, are synonymous in referring to the appearance and expression of the face, frequently occurring in literary and official language.
- *Vecih*, borrowed from Persian, expresses facial expression and is found mainly in poetic discourse.
- *Faç*, also of Persian origin, signifies outward appearance and facial structure, often used in artistic narratives.
- *Bet*, derived from Arabic, is used to denote the face and occurs mostly in religious or formal texts.

The high number of synonyms for *yüz* in Turkish — many of which originate from Arabic and Persian — demonstrates the language's historical development and its extensive cultural and literary interactions with these traditions. The stylistic range of these synonyms further highlights the richness of Turkish expressive resources in formal and literary registers.

In the process of synonym formation based on polysemy, each *sememe* (lexical meaning) can independently give rise to a separate synonymic row. Thus, polysemous words serve as a vital linguistic source in synonymy. Each meaning (sememe) possesses its own distinct synonym, which is used in a particular context. This phenomenon is especially prominent in somatic units — i.e., lexemes related to the human body — where polysemy and context-based synonymy are frequently observed.

Synonymic Series Based on the Sememes of the Lexeme *Oyoq* (Through the Lens of Polysemic Method)

Sememes	Meaning	Synonyms	Context (Scientific or Literary)
<i>oyoq</i> ¹	The limb of a living being used for walking and support	<i>poy, poycha, adoq</i>	The horse's hind legs were firmly pressed against the ground.
<i>oyoq</i> ²	The supporting part of an object that touches the ground	<i>tayanch, poya</i>	One leg of the chair was broken.
<i>oyoq</i> ³	The final part or end point of something	<i>oxir, ado, nihoya</i>	Stones were laid all the way to the end of the street.
<i>oyoq</i> ⁴	The period approaching the end of a season or time	<i>yakun, so'ng, oxir</i>	It was the tail end of autumn days.
<i>oyoq</i> ⁵	Edge, border, or lower area	<i>quyi, etak, chekka</i>	They reached the edge of the crop field.



<i>oyoq</i> ⁶	The area near the entrance of a room	<i>poygak, entrance area</i>	The girls were huddled near the doorway.
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As seen from the table, each sememe of the word *oyoq* carries an independent semantic load and is associated with its own specific synonymic set. This phenomenon serves as a clear example of synonym formation based on the polysemic approach and illustrates the semantic potential of somatic units.

In Turkish as well, synonymy is one of the important tools reflecting the richness of language, the diversity of expressive means, and the emotional and stylistic distinctiveness of speech. In particular, synonymy is frequently encountered among somatic units representing the names of body parts. This phenomenon is closely related to the historical development of the language, the mutual influence of dialects, the blending of lexical layers, sociocultural factors, as well as stylistic and expressive needs. [Ergene, O. 2014: 9/6, 319–365]

In Turkish, certain body part terms possess multiple synonymic variants used interchangeably across different contexts, dialects, or stylistic texts. [Karaatlı, 2016: 3(1), 97–117] For instance, the following synonymic set expressing the meaning of “head” is notable: *baş – kafa – kelle – ser* [Türk Dil Kurumu, 2020].

All these words denote the primary denotative meaning of “the upper part of a human or animal body, where the eyes, nose, mouth, and ears are located.” However, they differ in terms of usage domains, origin, and stylistic function:

- **Baş** – This is the most commonly used and neutral term in standard Turkish. It is actively used across all styles and also appears in metaphorical senses like “leader” or “first”: *başkan* (president), *başrol* (lead role), *baş ağrısı* (headache).
- **Kafa** – Borrowed from Arabic, this word is often used figuratively to express meanings like “intellect,” “reasoning,” or “thought.” For example: *kafası çalışıyor* (he/she is smart), *kafam karıştı* (I got confused). In colloquial language, it sometimes substitutes for the standard word for “head”.
- **Kelle** – This form is more commonly used to refer to the head of an animal or in colloquial/folk speech with negative or ironic connotations: *kellesini istemek* (to demand someone’s head as punishment).
- **Ser** – Of Persian origin, this term appears mainly in classical and historical texts, particularly in older literary styles. Although it is not actively used in modern standard Turkish, it may still be encountered in poetic or religious-historical contexts as a component in compound words such as *serdar* (commander) or *serasker* (military commander).

D. Aksan states in her scientific conclusions: “Although the semantic core of units within a synonymic row is the same, their origin, field of usage, and stylistic colorfulness differ” [D. Aksan, 2003]. This observation reveals the horizontal (presence of synonymous lexical units across various stylistic contexts) and vertical (differentiation according to historical layers) characteristics of synonymy in the Turkish language [D. Aksan, 2003].

The synonymic row: göz – ayn – basar – cesm – dide

In Turkish, somatic units denoting the meaning of “eye” are represented by several synonymous variants. This phenomenon is closely tied to the historical development of the language, multilingual influences, and stylistic-poetic layers. As the Turkish linguist M. Ergin



has pointed out, "The word *göz* in Turkish is the most frequently used unit in the modern literary language, with a neutral style and active usage" [M. Ergin, 2002]. This lexeme is used across all genres and semantically corresponds fully to the Uzbek word *ko'z*.

The word *ayn* in the synonymic row is an Arabic loanword and is more commonly found in classical literature and religious texts. While it is no longer actively used in today's literary language, it has been preserved in historical and poetic texts. The word *basar*, also of Arabic origin (from *baṣar* - بصر), was used mainly in religious, philosophical, or classical contexts to refer to the act of seeing or perception. It is practically inactive in contemporary Turkish literary language.

Another synonym, *cesm*, is borrowed from Persian and was historically used to refer to the eye or the organ of sight. It typically occurs within poetic discourse and is not actively used in modern Turkish. The word *dide*, also of Persian origin, served a poetic-stylistic function in Turkish literature and was mainly used in poetic contexts to signify the eye, often related to perception or the visual organ.

Within this synonymic row:

- *göz* is a modern, neutral, and active lexical item,
- *ayn* and *basar* belong to the historical Arabic layer and are no longer active,
- *cesm* and *dide* are Persian-origin poetic/stylistic elements.

The phenomenon of synonymy in the names of body parts in Uzbek and Turkish is one of the significant lexical-semantic relations in linguistics. It reflects the semantic richness, cultural cognition, and historical evolution of these two related languages. The formation of synonymic rows through somatic units is influenced by several factors, including social stratification, stylistic variation, historical period, cognitive processes, subjective evaluation, dialectal differences, interlingual influence, polysemy, and euphemistic needs.

Although synonymic rows of somatic units in Uzbek and Turkish often align semantically and connotatively, in some cases, differences arise in their phonetic forms, stylistic evaluation, or shades of meaning. Additionally, synonymic rows arising from the phenomenon of polysemy (multiple meanings) are observed in both languages as a manifestation of semantic evolution. This is especially evident in somatic units such as *foot*, *forehead*, and *eye*.

When examining the synonymic row of the *face* lexeme in Uzbek and Turkish, the number and semantic diversity of synonymous units surrounding this somatic concept indicate the lexical richness of both languages. Research results show that while around ten synonymous units correspond to the *yüz* (face) lexeme in Turkish, this number exceeds 16 in Uzbek. Such semantic breadth stems from the richness of national cognition and the expressive needs specific to each language. In particular, the *face* lexeme encompasses meanings such as external appearance, expression, emotional state, and even social interaction, which has expanded its synonymic range.

In conclusion, studying somatic synonymy in Uzbek and Turkish not only provides insights into lexical richness but also sheds light on national cognition, systems of values, aesthetic perspectives, and the unique features of language development. Comparative studies of human body part names are of significant importance for the development of both languages.



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