



SEMANTIC PERSONALISMS EXPRESSING CHARACTER TRAITS IN ABDULLAH QAHHOR'S SHORT STORIES

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Abstract. This article analyzes semantic personalisms that play an active role in the creation of character traits in the short stories of Abdulla Qahhor. Semantic personalism refers to linguistic units that directly denote a person's moral and psychological qualities, such as *cruel*, *irritable*, and *naïve*, as well as figurative devices that acquire evaluative meaning in context, including phraseological units, metaphorical expressions, and ironic rhetorical questions. Based on the stories "The Thief" (*O'g'ri*), "The Patient" (*Bemor*), "Pomegranate" (*Anor*), and "Horror" (*Dahshat*), personalisms were classified into semantic fields, and their connotative value and pragmatic functions, such as satire, psychologism, and social criticism, were identified and examined.

Keywords: semantic personalism, character, connotation, phraseological unit, evaluative semantics, Abdulla Qahhor, short story.

Introduction

Literary texts possess an anthropocentric nature, as their primary focus is directed toward human beings, their character traits, and systems of relationships. Therefore, a character's personality is often constructed through the evaluative potential of language: the writer "encodes" attitudes toward a particular person by means of adjectives, nouns, irony, tone of speech, repetition, and even silence. One of the distinctive strengths of Abdulla Qahhor's storytelling lies not in providing extensive descriptions of characters, but in "showing" them through carefully selected words and precise details.

In this article, the term *semantic personalism* is interpreted as a unified phenomenon encompassing two types of linguistic units: (1) lexical units that directly denote personal qualities (such as *cruel*, *stingy*, and *irritable*); and (2) figurative expressions that evaluate a person within a literary context and present him or her as a social or psychological type (for example, his eyes wandered anxiously or he laughed with a drooping face). While the first type possesses a nominative (naming) function, the second creates characterization through its connotative and pragmatic force. Connotation constitutes an important layer of meaning, incorporating emotional and stylistic evaluation as well as the author's attitude toward the depicted character.¹ The semantic field approach reveals the systematic organization and classification of linguistic units that express personal characteristics within a unified semantic structure.²

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that, in Abdulla Qahhor's short stories, character is often revealed not through detailed portraits or lengthy descriptions, but through

1 Leech, G. N. *Semantics*. — Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.

2 Lyons, J. *Semantics*. Vol. 1. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

speech and carefully selected details. This necessitates going beyond merely compiling a list of adjectives and requires the identification of phraseological and pragmatic personalisms as well. The aim of the article is to identify semantic personalisms that contribute to characterization in Qahhor's short stories, classify them into semantic groups, and explain their artistic functions, including satire, psychology, and social criticism.

In Qahhor's texts, personalisms frequently exist at the intersection of folk speech and literary style. On the one hand, the author adheres to the norms of the literary language; on the other hand, he preserves words characteristic of the characters' speech, including colloquial, coarse, and ironic expressions. As a result, characterization is achieved not only through descriptive qualities but also through the social register of speech. For instance, adjectives such as cruel, irritable, and *stingy* are evaluative lexical units from a semantic perspective; however, within the text they usually carry a strongly negative connotation. In determining this connotative "load," semantic explanations provided in explanatory dictionaries can serve as an important source of reference.

Methods

For the analysis, four of Abdulla Qahhor's short stories that reflect diverse psychological states and social relationships were selected: "O'g'ri" (The Thief), "Bemor" (The Patient), "Anor" (Pomegranate), and "Dahshat" (Horror). The corpus of texts used in this study is based on the editions included in the author's five-volume collected works.³

Linguistic units indicating character traits were collected from the texts through the method of continuous sampling and recorded in the form of a card index. The selection criteria were defined as follows: (a) the unit must be attributed to a person, whether by the character himself or herself, the author-narrator, or another character; (b) the presence of an evaluative component, whether positive, negative, or ambivalent; and (c) the unit must specifically contribute to the construction of character.

Subsequently, the selected units were classified into semantic fields based on the lexical-semantic system approach.⁴ At this stage, three categories were examined as distinct layers: (1) lexical personalisms (adjectives and nouns), (2) phraseological personalisms (fixed expressions and idiomatic units), and (3) pragmatic personalisms (interrogatives, imperatives, irony, and repetition). In interpreting lexical meaning and stylistic features, the definitions and examples provided in the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language* were used as a basis for determining whether a word was neutral or expressive in nature.⁵

For each unit included in the card index, information was recorded regarding who uttered it (the author, a character, or an interlocutor), the context in which it occurred (threat, request, humor, or irony), and the type of evaluation it conveyed (positive or negative). This approach made it possible to reveal not only the semantic but also the pragmatic functions of personalisms.

3 Abdulla Qahhor. Asarlar: 5 jildlik. — Toshkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi Adabiyot va san'at nashriyoti, 1987–1989.

4 Ne'matov H., Rasulov R. O'zbek tili sistem leksikologiyasi asoslari. — Toshkent: O'qituvchi, 1995.

5 O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati: 5 jild (A. Madvaliyev tahriri ostida). — Toshkent: "O'zbekiston milliy ensiklopediyasi" davlat ilmiy nashriyoti, 2006–2008.

Results

The analysis showed that semantic personalisms contributing to character portrayal in Abdulla Qahhor's short stories are mainly concentrated around four core semantic fields: (1) helplessness and vulnerability, (2) authority and oppression, (3) self-importance and embarrassment, and (4) fear and courage. The typical lexical and phraseological manifestations of each field are presented below.

1. The Semantic Field of "Helplessness and Vulnerability" (Social Weakness and Psychological Breakdown)

In the stories "The Thief" and "The Patient," the weakness of an ordinary person is not conveyed merely through the word "poor fellow" or "helpless". Rather, it is expressed through numerous subtle linguistic signals. In "The Thief," the condition of Qobil Bobo is revealed through descriptive personalisms such as "bareheaded and barefoot", "trembling violently", and "his eyes wandering anxiously". Such expressions represent a complex combination of fear, anxiety, and defenselessness. The writer approaches characterization "through the body"; that is, trembling and gaze function as external manifestations of inner instability.

In "The Patient," Sotiboldi's helplessness is intensified through figurative expressions such as "falling into panic" and "as if a screw were being tightened against his temples". Here, inner suffering is conveyed through the metaphor of physical pain. At the same time, folk speech formulas generalize the situation and present the protagonist as a social type whose fragile existence can easily be broken. As a result, a negative condition-poverty and hopelessness-becomes an essential feature of characterization.

2. The Semantic Field of "Authority and Oppression" (The Ironic Language of Power)

In "The Thief," the vocabulary associated with figures such as the "ellikboshi", "amin", and "prstav" reflects the psychology of authority through commanding tones, mockery, and cold pragmatism. Linguistic units such as "irritable", "belched arrogantly", and "laughed with a drooping face" reveal three fundamental characteristics of officialdom: (a) the absence of empathy; (b) pleasure derived from superiority; and (c) the transformation of ordinary people's suffering into a form of entertainment. Particularly noteworthy are logically unnecessary questions, such as "What kind of ox was it?" From a pragmatic perspective, such questions serve as displays of power. Here, the interrogative form functions not to obtain information but to exert pressure.

In "Horror," the personalism *cruel*, attributed to the "dodkho", also serves as a core marker of this semantic field. Although it appears to describe an individual trait, within the context it generalizes the mechanism of oppression and transforms the character into a symbol of a broader social evil. Thus, in Qahhor's works, a single word (cruel) can encapsulate an entire model of social relations.

3. The Semantic Field of "Self-Importance and Embarrassment" (Self-Justification and Inner Conflict)

In "Pomegranate," the character of Turobjon is revealed through two opposing poles. On the one hand, he behaves proudly and attempts to present himself as resourceful and capable; on the other hand, once the truth is exposed, he blushes and becomes embarrassed. The most significant feature of the personalisms within this field is their dynamic nature: they portray the conflict between the impulses of "I am clever and capable" and "I was mistaken" within a

single character. The author conveys this conflict not through direct moralizing but through subtle details such as bodily reactions, silence, and fragmented speech.

4. The Semantic Field of “Fear and Courage” and Internal-Speech Personalisms

In “Horror,” alongside the lexical expressions of fear (his heart trembled, panic, terror), an internal speech formula — “The dead have no soul!” — also functions as a character personalism. Semantically, repetition serves as an act of self-persuasion and reveals Unsin’s determination and willpower. Qahhor interprets courage not as the absence of fear but as the ability to act despite being afraid.

Overall, the analysis demonstrated the active participation of: (a) adjectival personalisms (cruel, irritable, stingy); (b) type-forming personalisms expressed through titles and official positions (amin, ellikboshi); (c) phraseological personalisms (his eyes wandered anxiously); and (d) pragmatic personalisms (ironic questions, commands, and repetition).

Furthermore, titles and official designations such as “amin”, “ellikboshi”, and “pristav” do not merely indicate social roles; within the context, they become indicators of character. The verbs associated with these nouns (*to belch arrogantly, to shout, to scold*) and the communicative strategies accompanying them (such as pressuring others through questioning) construct the verbal portrait of the official type. Thus, in certain cases, a personalism functions not as a single word but as a stable cluster of interconnected linguistic units.

The artistic impact of personalisms is also closely linked to their expressiveness. While explanatory dictionaries provide the primary meaning of a word, in Qahhor’s contexts an additional emotional layer is imposed upon that meaning. For example, the verb *to laugh* may be positive or neutral in ordinary usage; however, within a context of mockery it acquires a negative evaluative meaning. In this way, the writer is able to use the same lexical item as a different signal of character depending on the communicative situation.

Discussion

The findings indicate that semantic personalisms in Abdulla Qahhor’s short stories operate on at least three levels: (1) directly evaluative lexical units; (2) phraseological and figurative personalisms; and (3) pragmatic personalisms. The interaction of these three layers contributes to Qahhor’s laconic style. Rather than providing lengthy character portraits, he activates a character code through one or two carefully selected details, such as a particular manner of laughing, a glance, or the tone of a question.

A second important aspect is the role of personalisms as instruments of social criticism. In *‘The Thief,’* the vocabulary associated with officials reveals not merely individual character traits but a system of institutionalized oppression. Questions and laughter become mechanisms for undermining the dignity of ordinary people. In this sense, personalisms may also be regarded as sociological indicators: the nature of language reflects the nature of social relations. Qahhor’s satire gains its sharpness precisely through such linguistic details.

A third aspect concerns connotation and semantic shift. A neutral word may acquire a negative or ironic coloring within a literary context. For example, the verb *to laugh* is generally neutral or positive; however, when accompanied by an expression such as *laughed with a drooping face*, it becomes an act of mockery. Similarly, an interrogative form may function not as a means of communication but as a tool of pressure. Such cases reveal the distinction between dictionary meaning and contextual meaning and demonstrate how evaluative components become activated within synonymic series.

Finally, the mechanism through which a personalism develops into a “social type” is of particular importance. Qobil Bobo and Sotiboldi are individual characters, yet the character traits conveyed through language—such as being emotionally crushed by the need to seek justice or losing hope—represent the fate of broader social groups. In this respect, Qahhor’s personalisms confront the reader not merely with the experience of a single character but with the social problems of an entire historical period.

Qahhor’s method also clearly reveals power relations between characters. Who asks questions, who answers them, who interrupts, and who remains silent—all of these communicative actions function as indicators of character. Therefore, the study of semantic personalisms should take into account not only lexical units but also dialogue structure and communicative strategies.

Conclusion

Semantic personalisms expressing character traits in Abdulla Qahhor’s short stories constitute the principal building material of character portrayal. They are concentrated within such semantic fields as helplessness and vulnerability, authority and oppression, self-importance and embarrassment, and fear and courage, simultaneously revealing both the dynamics of characterization and the critique of social relations. The effectiveness of Qahhor’s style lies in the fact that personalisms often function more powerfully through phraseological details and pragmatic devices than through direct description. As a result, even within the limited framework of a short story, the author succeeds in creating vivid, memorable, and psychologically convincing characters.

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