



Pragmatic analysis of age-related idioms in Abdulla Qodiriy's "O'tgan kunlar"

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Annotation: This study provides a pragmatic analysis of age-related idioms in Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tgan kunlar*, the first novel in Uzbek literature. Through examining seven idioms, including *umr bermoq* (to give life) and *yoshga kirmoq* (to come of age), the research highlights how language conveys societal values, generational dynamics, and social hierarchies. The idioms reflect cultural attitudes toward aging, maturity, and respect, serving as linguistic tools that manage interpersonal relationships and illustrate the complexities of Uzbek society. By applying theories of speech acts, and politeness, the study reveals how these idioms function beyond their literal meanings to mediate power relations and express social norms. This research fills a gap in Uzbek linguistic literature by advancing understanding of the role idioms play in constructing and negotiating generational roles.

Key Words: Pragmatic analysis, age-related idioms, Uzbek literature, speech act theory, cultural norms

Introduction

"O'tgan kunlar" ("Bygone days"), written by an Uzbek writer Abdulla Qodiriy and first published in 1926, is considered to be the first novel in the Uzbek literature. Set against the backdrop of the 19th-century, the novel intricately weaves historical events around the tragic love story of its main characters, Otabek and Kumushbibi. The narrative unfolds amid the bloody power struggles of local rulers, featuring multi-layered storytelling, secondary plots, and escalating events that culminate in a dramatic conclusion.

In this context, age-related idioms in the novel helps to understand how the characters in the book express and navigate their identities and positions in a society that is changing. Through examining these idioms we can learn more about the pragmatic roles that language plays in expressing social standards and generational viewpoints related to the concept of "age".



Abdulla Qodiriy's "O'tgan kunlar" includes seven age-related idioms that provide significant understanding into the novel's description of societal and generational problems. These idioms are "umr bermoq," "yoshga kirmoq," "yoshga bormoq," "umr - otilgan o'q," "yoshi qaytmoq," "yoshga qadam qo'ymoq" and "yoshga yetmoq." These idioms, which represent broader social views and customs, describe cultural views of age and life stages.

It is essential to study these idioms in order to comprehend how the novel addresses respect and generational conflict. For instance, idioms like "yoshga yetmoq" and "yoshga qadam qo'ymoq" offer insight into cultural perspectives on growing older and the changing phases of life. In addition, "umr - otilgan o'q" can draw attention to the conflict between the past and the present.

Thus, these idioms serve as vital linguistic symbols, illuminating the novel's exploration of social themes. By examining these expressions, this research aims to uncover how language pragmatically expresses and negotiates social roles, offering a deeper understanding of the novel's depiction of mutual respect.

Literature review

The study of idioms has become a popular topic in linguistics, especially in the domains of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and semantics. As stable word combinations with figurative meanings, idioms frequently show social standards, cultural values, and historical situations. The semantic and syntactic characteristics of idioms have been the subject of numerous researches, including those with an emphasis on their functions in cognition and communication (Gibbs, 1994; Nunberg, 1978). However a growing amount of studies are looking at the pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of idioms, particularly as they relate to age and generational inequalities. Studies by Kövecses (2002) and Cacciari and Tabossi (1988), for example, have shown that idiomatic expressions frequently represent the worldview of specific social groupings, including communities based on age. This is especially true in societies where generations have strong sense of self, as more traditional expressions can function as language identifiers of particular historical or social eras. Studies of language change have focused on the question of how idioms change or stay the same across generations (Pawley & Syder, 1983), and a more recent work has started to investigate how age-related idioms operate in pragmatic contexts (Lauwereyns, 2002).



Theories of speech actions and implicature (Grice, 1975) provide a foundation for the pragmatic analysis of idioms. These theories see idioms as both linguistic entities with figurative meanings and as instruments for pragmatic inference. Idioms frequently have hidden significance in addition to their literal or metaphorical substance, and these meanings vary according to the context. When it comes to age-related idioms, the speaker's and listener's generational standing can have an impact on the idiomatic meaning. Another pertinent paradigm is the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), which discusses how idioms might be used to lessen acts that could be perceived as difficult, especially in situations when age and rank are important factors.

The pragmatic theory of relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) is also helpful in assessing the seven age-related idioms from “O’tgan kunlar”. According to this theory, speakers select words with the understanding that their listeners will perceive them in a way that makes the most sense for the communication situation. Idioms, with their deep cultural and historical roots, shed light on the characters' practical approaches throughout the book, particularly on how they handle age-related social dynamics.

Idioms in many languages and cultures have often been the subject of a great deal of research, but fewer studies have specifically examined the use of idioms connected to age. “O’tgan kunlar” is one of the most studied books in Uzbek literary history, however, the practical applications of its idiomatic language are still rarely learned. The majority of evaluations have focused on the topics, character development, and story structure; however the use of idiomatic expressions and their role in reflection of social relations—particularly those related to age and social hierarchy—have received little attention.

By providing a targeted pragmatic analysis of seven age-related idioms in “O’tgan kunlar”, this study seeks to close this gap. Through an analysis of pragmatic theories, this study shows how Qodiriy’s work depicts societal hierarchies and generational divides in language. Additionally, it advances knowledge about the function idioms play in forming interpersonal relations in the Uzbek society, an area that has received little attention in the literature on language acquisition.

Methodology

Using pragmatic and sociolinguistic methods, this study employs a qualitative research methodology to examine idiomatic terms in Abdulla Qodiriy’s novel “O’tgan kunlar”. The novel’s central themes of age-related social



duties and interactions are the basis for the focus on seven idioms. The study enables a thorough, context-sensitive investigation of how these idioms represent social structures and generational dynamics by restricting the analysis to only seven idioms. The selected idioms are meant to serve as exemplary instances of how language is used in the story to convey cultural ideas about age, ethical behavior, and respect.

This method's explanation is that idioms—especially those connected to aging—offer a wealth of material for pragmatic study. Their pragmatic and social functions can be thoroughly explored through a focused analysis, and their figurative meanings are closely related to cultural values.

The idioms examined in this research were chosen after closely examining with “O'tgan kunlar”. Finding idioms used by or about characters belonging to various age groups was a necessary step in the process, especially when it came to power relations, respect, and social expectations.

The idioms were found in a variety of conversations between characters that represented different age groups, including older people conversing with younger people or the other way around. This contextual information illuminates how language is adapted to various social interactions, which is essential for comprehending the pragmatic purpose of the idioms.

A pragmatic framework was used to analyze the chosen idioms, with a focus on implicature (Grice, 1975) and speech act theories (Austin, 1962). These theories offer instruments for investigating the ways in which idioms communicate social relationships, cultural norms, and subliminal meanings in addition to their literal meanings. Furthermore, the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) was utilized to comprehend the ways in which idioms are employed to defuse potentially embarrassing situations in discussions between people of various ages.

Every idiom was examined in relation to its story setting, paying particular attention to the following elements:

- The pragmatic function of the idiom is to improve communication, particularly with regard to manners, deference, or social hierarchy.
- The age-related cultural norms and values, such reverence for elders and the generational transmission of knowledge that becomes embedded in colloquial expressions.



- How characters from different generations' power connections are either strengthened or challenged by the employment of age-related idioms.
- Additionally, idiom usage patterns were examined by comparing them across various encounters to determine whether the idioms' meanings varied based on the characters or context.

In light of the text's cultural and historical background, this study recognizes the ethical need to interpret idioms within the proper sociocultural framework. Care was made to ensure that the idioms and their meanings were not influenced by external cultural perspectives during the study process. Rather, the approach sought to honor the Uzbek society's historical and cultural context as it is portrayed in "O'tgan kunlar".

Furthermore, the study was conducted with an understanding of the necessity to depict the idioms in a way that is consistent with the cultural values they communicate, given the possibility for cultural sensitivity when interpreting idioms related to age and social roles. The goal of the study is to prevent misunderstandings that can alter the idioms' cultural relevance or reduce them to literal translations.

Results

1. *Umr bermoq (to give life)*

This expression of a wish for long life is frequently found in prayers and blessings. For example, Hasanali says, "Bekka xudo umr bersa..." (If God grants a long life to Bek) in a discussion over Otabek's age. As for its pragmatic function, giving life is seen as respect and carries with it the expectation of a long life, which reflects the cultural emphasis on the divine's role in human existence and longevity. This idiom emphasizes the Uzbek custom of yielding to fate and divine will, particularly about life and age. In this idiom the word "umr |"(life) acquires a sense of "a long life".

2. *Yoshga qadam qo'ymoq, which means "to grow old"*

Hasanali mentions Otabek's age, saying that he is about to turn 24 years old: "Bu yil to'ppa-to'g'ri yigirma to'rt yoshga qadam qo'yadilar". Pragmatically, this expression denotes the start of a new phase of life and a turning point in the development of adulthood. Its cultural significance is that reaching a specific age is frequently associated with the start of a new stage of societal expectations.

3. *Yoshga kirmoq (to reach ascertain age)*



“Chindan ham necha yoshga kirganimni o'zim bilmayman” (I don't even know how old I truly am) is a question raised by Otabek in the same conversation. The idiom's pragmatic function is to convey confusion or misunderstanding regarding aging, mirroring how people's perceptions of time fluctuate in social situations. The cultural practice of honoring noteworthy age-related milestones, especially those associated with maturity and responsibility, is reflected in its significance.

4. *Yoshga bormoq*, meaning “to reach a certain age”

After considering Otabek's development, Qutidor remarks, “Ammo, haqiqatda, oradan o'n besh-yigirma yil o'tib, siz ham katta yigit bo'lgansiz” This idiom pragmatically expresses the expectation that one will grow older and wiser. It draws attention to the way in which aging is associated with the gradual development of wisdom and experience.

5. *Katta yigit bo'lmoq*, which means becoming a grown man

Qutidor uses this idiom to describe Otabek's maturation into an adult. This expression means reaching adulthood and taking on society responsibilities. In the Uzbek society, where a child is believed to take on certain responsibilities in the family and community at a certain age, which becomes a significant turning point when he can already be considered as a “grown man”.

6. “*Umr - otilgan o'q*” means “Life is like a shot”

Qutidor emphasizes the speed and unavoidable nature of aging by saying, “Umr- otilgan o'q emish” (Life is like a shot). The idiom serves as a reminder of one's mortality and the fleeting nature of existence. This idiom represents a saying which expresses the idea that life is too short and is therefore philosophically significant.

7. *Yoshi qaytmoq* (to age backwards)

Qambar says, “Hoji akaning yoshi qaytib, ko'ngli juda ham bo'shashib ketibdir!” after a conversation. (Hoji's heart has softened significantly, and it seems as though his age is returning). This expression is used to humorously, and frequently with a hint of indulgent irony, describe situations in which someone acts much younger than their actual age. It suggests that humorous remarks about people of old age are accepted in society, fusing humor.

8. *Yoshga yetmoq*: to come of age.

This phrase is often used in discussions about coming-of-age ceremonies for boys, such as “o'g'ilchalarning yoshi yetib sunnati nabiyunani bajo keltirish” (when boys reach the age for religious rites). It highlights the cultural



significance of maturity from both a social and religious perspective, underscoring the importance of ceremonies that mark pivotal life transitions.

The following patterns can be seen in the way these idioms are used:

Age as a marker of social status. A lot of idioms stress how one's age determines social function. Examples of such idioms are *yoshga bormoq* and *katta yigit bo'lmoq*, which reinforce expectations of maturity and responsibility.

Life as a journey. Phrases such as *umr- otilgan o'q* emphasize how short life is and how time appears as a straight line that leads from youth to old age.

Irony and indulgence to aging. "Yoshi qaytmoq" idiom in the given context represents a good-natured and well-disposed attitude towards aged people, who allow themselves to enjoy life in a youthful way (???)

Milestones and ceremonies. *Yoshga yetmoq* and other idioms highlight the significance that some cultures place on the rules and rituals that symbolize life phases and, in particular, the coming-of-age process.

Discussion

The age-idioms selected from the novel "O'tgan kunlar" offers profound insights into the way the author depicts age perception in the Uzbek society of the end of the 19th century. *Umr bermoq* (to give life) , for instance, represents a worldview in which life is viewed as a gift from a higher power, but *yoshga yetmoq* (to come of age) and *katta yigit bo'lmoq* (to become a grown-up young man) emphasize the significance of achieving milestones that indicate social responsibility. *Yoshi qaytmoq* (reversed in age) demonstrates that aging may be considered humorously, combining seriousness and comedy.

These results imply that idioms are essential for communicating social and cultural beliefs about age and intergenerational interactions. O'tgan Kunlar frequently employs age-related idioms, suggesting that the book not only captures the perspectives of specific people but also the views of society on growing older, deference, and the passage of time.

This study's limited emphasis on a certain set of idioms restricts the analysis's potential applications. Additional developments in the pragmatic roles of idioms in O'tgan kunlar could be found in a bigger dataset. Furthermore, the analysis of the idioms is conducted in a specific historical and cultural context, which can restrict how broadly applicable the results are.

Conclusion

The analysis of age-related idioms in O'tgan kunlar highlights how Abdulla Qodiriy uses language pragmatically to reflect societal norms, generational



dynamics, and cultural values. Each idiom serves a distinct pragmatic function within the narrative, whether it's to convey respect, underscore social responsibility, or illustrate the fleeting nature of life. For instance, idioms like *umr bermoq* express reverence for life as a divine gift, while *katta yigit bo'lmoq* emphasizes the societal expectations tied to adulthood and maturity.

Moreover, *yoshi qaytmoq* introduces a humorous tone to discussions about aging, balancing the seriousness of social roles with playful commentary on vitality in old age. These idioms do more than convey literal meanings—they manage interpersonal relationships, communicate implicit messages, and mediate social hierarchies. By employing these linguistic tools, Qodiriy illustrates not only the individual characters but also the broader societal values that define respect, responsibility, and generational divides.

Future research can extend this analysis by exploring additional idioms or comparing age-related idioms with those concerning other social dimensions, such as gender or class. Overall, O'tgan kunlar's idioms offer valuable insights into the cultural beliefs and social hierarchies of the time, revealing the ways language pragmatically shapes and reflects a society's values.

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