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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UZBEK LITERARY LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC NORMS IN THE LEGACY OF ALISHER NAVOI

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Abstract: This article examines the development of the Uzbek literary language and the formation of linguistic norms through the literary and scholarly heritage of Alisher Navoi. Particular attention is given to Navoi’s contribution to the development of Chagatai Turkic, a major historical literary tradition associated with the development of modern Uzbek. The study analyzes the lexical, grammatical, stylistic, and cultural dimensions of Navoi’s writings, with special emphasis on Muhokamat ul-Lug‘atayn and his literary works. Historical-comparative, descriptive, and textual-analytical methods are employed to investigate the relationship between literary creativity, linguistic standardization, and cultural identity. The analysis demonstrates that Navoi expanded the expressive possibilities of the Turkic literary language, strengthened its literary prestige, and contributed to the consolidation of established linguistic conventions. The article also discusses the significance of Navoi’s linguistic heritage for contemporary Uzbek language education, literary studies, and the preservation of national cultural values.

Keywords: Alisher Navoi, Uzbek literary language, Chagatai Turkic, linguistic norms, literary language development, lexical enrichment, grammatical structure, stylistic norms, historical linguistics, linguistic heritage, cultural identity.

Introduction

The development of a literary language is a complex historical process influenced by cultural traditions, social communication, political institutions, education, and literary creativity. Literary languages emerge and evolve through the interaction of spoken varieties, written conventions, and the intellectual activities of writers and scholars. Within the history of Central Asian literature, Alisher Navoi occupies a particularly significant position because his literary and scholarly achievements contributed to the development and prestige of Chagatai Turkic.

Alisher Navoi (1441–1501) was an outstanding poet, thinker, statesman, and representative of the Timurid Renaissance. His literary heritage represents a major stage in the historical development of

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Turkic written culture. Through his poetry, prose, and linguistic observations, Navoi demonstrated that Turkic could serve as a sophisticated medium for artistic expression, philosophical reflection, and intellectual communication.

The literary environment of the fifteenth century was characterized by the coexistence of several languages, particularly Turkic and Persian. Persian possessed an established position in literary and scholarly traditions, while Turkic was increasingly used in written artistic expression. Navoi played a prominent role in strengthening the literary status of Turkic by producing works that demonstrated its extensive expressive resources.

One of the most important aspects of Navoi's contribution is his influence on literary language conventions. His writings illustrate the systematic use of vocabulary, grammatical constructions, stylistic devices, and poetic forms that contributed to the development of Chagatai literary expression.

However, it is important to distinguish the historical Chagatai literary language from modern standard Uzbek. Although Navoi's heritage is central to the history of Uzbek literature and literary language, modern Uzbek developed through subsequent linguistic, social, and historical processes.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of Alisher Navoi's literary and scholarly heritage in the historical development of the Uzbek literary language, with particular attention to lexical enrichment, grammatical expression, stylistic conventions, and linguistic norms.

Literature Review

The contribution of Alisher Navoi to the development of Turkic literary culture has been investigated in historical linguistics, Turkic studies, and literary scholarship.

János Eckmann's Chagatay Manual (1966) provides a fundamental description of the grammatical system of Chagatai. The work is important for understanding the linguistic structures represented in the literary tradition associated with Navoi. Its analysis of phonological, morphological, and syntactic features provides a basis for examining historical linguistic conventions.

Robert Devereux's translation of Navoi's Muhokamat ul-Lug'atayn, published as Judgment of Two Languages (1966), makes the treatise accessible to international researchers. This source is particularly important because it presents Navoi's arguments concerning the lexical richness and literary capabilities of Turkic in comparison with Persian.

Maria Eva Subtelny's Timurids in Transition (2007) provides historical context for the interaction between Turkic and Persian cultural traditions. Her research contributes to understanding the social and political environment in which Navoi's literary activities developed.

Lars Johanson's Turkic (2021) offers a broader linguistic perspective on the structural characteristics and historical development of Turkic languages. This work is useful for distinguishing the historical features of Chagatai from those of modern Turkic languages.

András J. E. Bodrogligeti's A Grammar of Chagatay (2001) provides additional linguistic information about the grammatical organization of Chagatai and its written conventions.

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The reviewed literature demonstrates that Navoi's influence should be understood within the broader history of Turkic literary language development. His contribution was especially important in the expansion of literary expression and the strengthening of linguistic prestige, rather than the formal establishment of a modern standardized Uzbek language.

Materials and Methods

The primary materials of this study are selected literary and scholarly works of Alisher Navoi, particularly Muhokamat ul-Lug'atayn, Khamsa, and Khazayin ul-Ma'ani.

The research employs qualitative methods.

The historical-comparative method is used to examine the linguistic environment of the Timurid period and the historical relationship between Chagatai Turkic and the later development of Uzbek literary traditions.

The descriptive method is applied to identify the major linguistic dimensions of Navoi's literary heritage, including lexical resources, grammatical structures, and stylistic conventions.

Textual analysis is used to interpret Navoi's statements about the expressive possibilities of Turkic and to examine the broader significance of his literary practice.

The analytical-synthetic method is employed to generalize scholarly perspectives on the role of literary creativity in the development of language norms.

The study is theoretical and historical in nature. It does not involve experimental research or quantitative linguistic measurements.

Results and Analysis

1. Alisher Navoi and the development of the Turkic literary tradition

The analysis indicates that Alisher Navoi played an influential role in the historical development of Chagatai Turkic as a literary language.

His contribution is especially evident in his consistent use of Turkic for sophisticated literary compositions. At a time when Persian held substantial literary prestige, Navoi demonstrated that Turkic could express complex philosophical ideas, emotional experiences, and artistic imagery.

His literary works contributed to the expansion of the functional possibilities of Turkic in poetry and prose. This development was important because the prestige of a literary language depends not only on its linguistic structure but also on the range and cultural significance of texts produced in it.

Navoi's contribution can therefore be interpreted as a major factor in strengthening the literary authority of Chagatai.

2. Lexical enrichment and semantic expression

One of the most significant dimensions of Navoi's linguistic heritage is his attention to vocabulary and semantic differentiation.

In Muhokamat ul-Lug'atayn, Navoi discusses the expressive capabilities of Turkic and emphasizes the existence of words that convey subtle distinctions in meaning.

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His observations reveal an awareness of the relationship between lexical choice, emotional expression, and stylistic precision.

The linguistic significance of these arguments lies in their demonstration that lexical richness is associated not merely with the number of words in a language but also with their semantic functions and contextual possibilities.

Navoi's literary works further illustrate the expressive potential of Turkic vocabulary through the use of figurative language, emotionally marked expressions, and stylistic variation.

These features contributed to the development of literary conventions and provided models for subsequent generations of writers.

3. Grammatical structures and literary expression

The development of a literary language is closely connected with the consistent and creative use of grammatical resources.

Chagatai Turkic, like other Turkic languages, possessed an agglutinative morphological structure in which grammatical relationships were frequently expressed through suffixation.

Navoi's works demonstrate the productive use of morphological forms and syntactic constructions in sophisticated literary contexts.

His poetry illustrates how grammatical structures can be adapted to poetic rhythm, semantic emphasis, and stylistic expression.

However, it would be historically inaccurate to claim that Navoi personally created the grammatical system of the Uzbek language. The grammatical foundations of Turkic languages developed over many centuries.

Navoi's achievement was to employ the existing linguistic resources of Chagatai with exceptional literary skill and to contribute to the consolidation of influential written conventions.

4. Stylistic norms and literary language development

Stylistic conventions constitute an important component of literary language development.

Navoi's works demonstrate a wide range of expressive techniques, including metaphor, comparison, symbolic imagery, parallelism, and rhetorical organization.

These techniques enabled the literary language to represent complex emotional, ethical, philosophical, and social themes.

His Khamsa provides particularly important examples of extended narrative poetry in Turkic. The work demonstrates that Chagatai could support sophisticated poetic structures and complex literary composition.

Similarly, Khazayin ul-Ma'ani reflects the diversity of poetic expression in Navoi's literary heritage.

Through these works, Navoi contributed to the formation and dissemination of influential stylistic models.

The importance of these models lies in their subsequent reception within Turkic literary traditions.

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5. Linguistic norms and historical standardization

The concept of linguistic norms requires careful historical interpretation.

In contemporary linguistics, standardization generally involves processes such as selection, codification, elaboration, and acceptance of linguistic forms.

The linguistic environment of Navoi's period differed considerably from modern systems of language standardization.

Navoi did not establish a modern regulatory institution or produce an official grammar of standard Uzbek. Nevertheless, his literary practice contributed to the elaboration and prestige of Chagatai written conventions.

His works provided influential examples of lexical selection, grammatical expression, and stylistic organization.

Consequently, his contribution to linguistic norms is best understood as a historical process of literary elaboration and the strengthening of established written conventions.

6. The historical relationship between Chagatai and modern Uzbek

The relationship between Chagatai Turkic and modern Uzbek is an essential issue in evaluating Navoi's linguistic heritage.

Chagatai was a historical literary language used across a broad geographical and cultural area of Central Asia.

Modern Uzbek developed through later processes involving regional varieties, literary traditions, educational reforms, and language planning.

Therefore, Chagatai should not be treated as completely identical to contemporary standard Uzbek.

At the same time, Navoi's works occupy a central place in the literary and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan and have played an important role in shaping the historical consciousness of Uzbek literary culture.

His influence is reflected in literary education, scholarly research, cultural memory, and the continued study of classical Turkic texts.

7. Summary of the main analytical findings

Linguistic dimension	Navoi's contribution	Historical significance
Literary language	Extensive use of Chagatai Turkic in major literary works	Strengthening of Turkic literary prestige
Vocabulary	Attention to lexical richness and semantic differentiation	Expansion of literary expressive possibilities
Grammar	Sophisticated use of existing morphological and syntactic resources	Consolidation of influential literary conventions

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Stylistics	Development of complex poetic and rhetorical expression	Formation of important literary models
Linguistic norms	Promotion of consistent and prestigious written usage	Contribution to historical literary elaboration
Cultural identity	Recognition of Turkic as a language of intellectual and artistic expression	Preservation and development of Turkic literary heritage

The results demonstrate that Navoi's contribution to the historical development of the Uzbek literary language was multidimensional, encompassing lexical, grammatical, stylistic, and cultural aspects.

Discussion

The analysis confirms the importance of interpreting Alisher Navoi's linguistic heritage within the historical context of Chagatai literary culture.

His works contributed to the development of literary conventions by demonstrating the expressive possibilities of Turkic in a cultural environment where Persian enjoyed considerable prestige.

This historical achievement should not be confused with the formal codification of modern Uzbek linguistic norms.

Navoi's influence was primarily literary, intellectual, and cultural. Through his writings, he helped establish influential models of sophisticated Turkic expression.

An important theoretical issue concerns the relationship between literary prestige and linguistic development. The prestige of a language may increase when influential writers demonstrate its ability to express complex ideas and produce major literary works.

Navoi's creative activity provides a significant historical example of this relationship.

His linguistic arguments also remain relevant to discussions of language identity and the preservation of literary heritage. However, the value of his contribution does not depend on proving the inherent superiority of Turkic over Persian.

Modern linguistic scholarship recognizes that languages differ in their structures and expressive conventions without being inherently unequal in their capacity to communicate human experience.

From an educational perspective, Navoi's heritage offers valuable material for teaching the history of the Uzbek literary language, historical vocabulary, stylistics, and comparative linguistics.

Students studying his works can develop a deeper understanding of the historical processes through which literary traditions emerge and linguistic conventions acquire cultural authority.

The present research is limited to historical and textual interpretation. A more detailed linguistic investigation would require the systematic examination of original Chagatai manuscripts, critical editions, and historical linguistic corpora.

Further studies could compare selected grammatical and lexical features of Navoi's writings with those found in earlier and later Turkic literary texts.

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Conclusion

Alisher Navoi's literary and scholarly heritage represents a major stage in the historical development of the Turkic literary tradition and occupies a central place in the history of Uzbek literature.

The analysis demonstrates that Navoi contributed significantly to the strengthening of Chagatai Turkic as a prestigious language of artistic and intellectual expression.

His works reveal the extensive lexical resources, grammatical possibilities, and stylistic flexibility of the Turkic literary language.

The treatise Muhokamat ul-Lug'atayn is particularly important because it provides explicit arguments concerning the expressive capabilities of Turkic in comparison with Persian.

Navoi's literary practice also contributed to the development of influential written conventions and stylistic models that became part of the broader Turkic literary heritage.

At the same time, his contribution must be distinguished from the later historical formation and codification of modern standard Uzbek.

The enduring importance of Navoi's legacy lies in its contribution to linguistic awareness, literary development, cultural identity, and the preservation of historical language traditions.

His works remain valuable sources for research and education in historical linguistics, Uzbek literary history, stylistics, and the study of linguistic norms.

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