

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Formation Models of Prefixal Neologisms in Modern Uzbek

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Abstract

The article examines the formation models of prefixal neologisms in modern Uzbek. Although Uzbek belongs to the agglutinative type in which suffixation is the dominant word-formation technique, the vocabulary of the last three decades shows a steady increase of units built with preposed formatives such as anti-, mikro-, makro-, kiber-, eko-, super-, post-, no- and be-. The study identifies five recurrent models: transplantation of a ready-made foreign prefixal word, the hybrid model combining a borrowed prefix with a native or long-assimilated stem, the calque model in which a native preposed formative renders a foreign prefix, the analogical-serial model in which one successful formation generates a whole paradigm, and the occasional model typical of journalism and advertising. Each model is described in terms of its input, its degree of productivity and its orthographic behaviour. The material is drawn from press texts, information-technology terminology, economic and medical vocabulary. The paper argues that the traditional grammatical claim that Uzbek has no prefixes needs to be reformulated: the language has no inherited prefixes, but it has an expanding inventory of borrowed prefixal formatives whose behaviour is regular enough to be described in word-formation terms.

KEY WORDS

Uzbek language, neologism, prefixation, word-formation model, borrowed prefix, prefixoid, hybrid formation, calque, productivity, orthographic norm.

INTRODUCTION

Word-formation is the principal internal source of new vocabulary in any living language, and the way a language builds new words is determined by its structural type. Uzbek belongs to the agglutinative type, in which grammatical and derivational meanings are expressed by suffixes attached to an invariable stem, and the descriptive tradition has long treated suffixation as the only genuine word-formation technique of the language [1]. This position is well founded historically: the Turkic morphological system inherited by Uzbek contains no native prefixes, and the entire derivational load in the inherited layer of the vocabulary is carried by such suffixes as -chi, -lik, -dosh, -kor, -zor and -gar. The vocabulary of the last three decades, however, does not fit this description

without reservation. Alongside the productive suffixal patterns, Uzbek now regularly forms new units by means of preposed formatives, and the number of such units in the press, in specialised terminologies and in everyday speech has grown to the point where they can no longer be dismissed as isolated borrowings.

The theoretical difficulty is terminological before it is empirical. Uzbek grammars describe the elements be-, no-, ba-, ser-, kam- and ham-, which entered the language from Persian and Tajik, as old qo'shimchalar, that is, preposed affixes, and thereby avoid the term prefix, while the newer international formatives anti-, mikro-, super- and post- are often analysed as the first components of compound words rather than as

affixes [2]. The two descriptions are not equivalent, and the choice between them has consequences: an element treated as a compound component is written according to compounding rules and is not expected to form series, whereas an element treated as a prefix is expected to be bound, recurrent and semantically regular. The present study adopts a working definition based on the criteria current in general morphology, according to which a prefix is a bound morpheme that precedes the base, recurs in an open series of formations, contributes a stable and predictable meaning, and, as a rule, does not change the part-of-speech membership of the base [3].

The aim of the article is to establish and describe the models by which prefixal neologisms are formed in modern Uzbek. The tasks are to determine which preposed formatives are currently productive, to classify the recurrent formation patterns, to characterise the degree of productivity of each pattern, and to identify the orthographic and normative problems that these formations create. The material consists of neologisms attested in Uzbek press texts, in information-technology and economic terminology and in medical vocabulary of the period between 2000 and 2025. The methods applied are structural-derivational analysis, componential analysis of the meaning of the formative, and comparison with the corresponding patterns of English and Russian, from which most of the formatives have been borrowed.

METHOD

The description of prefixal neologisms requires a preliminary decision about what counts as a prefix in a language of the agglutinative type. General morphology defines the prefix as a bound morpheme placed before the root, and it distinguishes prefixes from the first components of compounds by the criterion of independent occurrence: a compound component can occur as a free word, whereas a prefix cannot [4]. Applied to Uzbek, this criterion produces a graded rather than a binary result. The formative *anti-* never occurs as a free word in Uzbek and satisfies the criterion fully, as in *antikorrupsion*, *antivirus* and *antimonopol*. The formative *kam-* is homophonous with the free adjective *kam* meaning *few*, and in *kamquvvat* or *kamsuv* it retains a transparent link with that adjective, which places it at the border between prefixation and compounding. The formative *mikro-* is bound in Uzbek but corresponds to a free element in the source languages, and its status therefore depends on whether the

analysis is synchronic or etymological. For the purposes of the present description these units are treated together as prefixal formatives, and their internal differences are recorded as degrees of affixhood rather than as a division into two unrelated classes.

The oldest layer of prefixal formatives in Uzbek is the Iranian one, which entered the language through centuries of contact with Persian and Tajik and was already fully assimilated by the classical period. It includes the negative and privative *be-* and *no-*, as in *bebaho*, *beadab*, *behuda*, *noaniq*, *nohaq* and *noto'g'ri*; the possessive *ba-*, as in *badavlat* and *barvaqt*; the intensifying and quantifying *ser-* and *kam-*, as in *serunum*, *sersuv*, *sershovqin*, *kamquvvat* and *kamsuv*; and the comitative *ham-*, as in *hamkor*, *hamfikir*, *hamsuhbat* and *hamkasb*. These formatives are recorded in the morpheme dictionaries of the language and are described there as productive [5]. Their productivity, however, is now of a particular kind: they continue to attach freely to stems of Iranian and Arabic origin, but their extension to recent international borrowings is limited and often stylistically marked. Formations such as *nostandart* and *nomutanosib* are accepted without difficulty, whereas the attachment of *be-* to a technical borrowing is rare. The Iranian layer thus provides the model of prefixation but does not itself account for the growth of prefixal neologisms.

The second layer consists of the Greco-Latin and international formatives that entered Uzbek predominantly through Russian in the twentieth century and directly through English in the twenty-first. This layer is by far the most numerous and includes *anti-*, *arxi-*, *avto-*, *bio-*, *geo-*, *giper-*, *gipo-*, *dez-*, *infra-*, *kvazi-*, *makro-*, *mikro-*, *mono-*, *multi-*, *neo-*, *poli-*, *post-*, *psevdo-*, *re-*, *sub-*, *super-*, *tele-*, *trans-*, *ultra-* and *ekstra-*. What distinguishes this layer from the Iranian one is that its formatives arrived together with the terminological systems in which they function, so that each formative is associated with a definite conceptual domain: *giper-* and *gipo-* with medicine, *makro-* and *mikro-* with economics and physics, *avto-*, *tele-* and *elektro-* with technology, *post-* and *neo-* with the humanities. This association is what makes the formatives available for new coinages, because the speaker who has learned *mikroiqtisodiyot* has also learned that *mikro-* denotes a small-scale counterpart of whatever the base denotes, and can therefore produce *mikroqarz* and *mikrofirma* without further instruction [6].

A third and chronologically most recent layer is formed by the

formatives associated with digital technologies and with the ecological and social agenda of the last two decades: kiber-, veb-, eko-, nano-, smart-, onlayn- and the abbreviated e-. These elements differ from the Greco-Latin layer in that they entered the language directly from English, often without Russian mediation, and in that they are frequently attached to native or long-assimilated Uzbek stems from the very first attestations. The result is a set of formations such as kiberxavfsizlik, kibermakon, kiberjinoiat, ekoturizm, ekomahsulot, elektron hukumat and its abbreviated variant e-hukumat. Because these formatives are new, their behaviour is not yet regulated by orthographic norm, and the same unit may appear in three graphic variants within a single text, which is discussed below.

The first and simplest formation model is transplantation, in which a prefixal word is borrowed from the source language as an indivisible whole and only subsequently, through the accumulation of similar borrowings, becomes analysable in Uzbek. Words such as antibiotik, avtomobil, televizor, monopoliya and transport entered Uzbek as unanalysed units, and their prefixal structure became apparent to speakers only when a sufficient number of formations with the same initial element had accumulated. This model does not by itself produce neologisms in Uzbek, since the derivational operation is performed in the source language, but it is a necessary precondition for the other models: it supplies the inventory of formatives that the language will later use independently. The transition from an unanalysed borrowing to an available formative is gradual and can be observed in the fact that speakers begin to coin words with a formative long before that formative is recorded in dictionaries as an affix [7].

The second model, and the most productive one at present, is the hybrid model, in which a borrowed prefixal formative is attached to a stem that is native or has long been assimilated into Uzbek. This is the model that produces genuine Uzbek neologisms, since the derivational act takes place within the language. Typical results are kiberxavfsizlik, formed from the English formative and the Arabic-Uzbek noun xavfsizlik; mikroqarz, in which the Greek formative combines with a stem of Arabic origin; antikorrupsion, antibozor, superfoyda, ekomahsulot and ekoxo'jalik. The hybrid model demonstrates most clearly that the formatives have become part of the derivational system of Uzbek rather than remaining features of borrowed vocabulary, because a formative that can attach to a native stem is by definition available to the grammar of

the receiving language. The productivity of the model is uneven across formatives: mikro-, eko-, kiber- and anti- combine with native stems readily, whereas psevd-, kvazi- and arxi- remain almost entirely confined to borrowed bases.

The third model is calquing, in which a foreign prefixal formation is reproduced by means of Uzbek material. Two sub-types can be distinguished. In the first, the foreign prefix is replaced by an Iranian formative already established in Uzbek, so that a negative formation with non- or un- is rendered by no- or be-: nostandart, nomutanosib, nokorporativ, besamar, beg'araz. In the second, the prefixal relation is rendered analytically, by a construction rather than by a derived word, as when a negative formation is expressed by a postposed emas or by the suffix -siz. The competition between no- and -siz is of particular interest, because the two express closely related meanings by opposite techniques, prefixation and suffixation, and the choice between them is partly determined by the origin of the stem: -siz attaches freely to native stems, whereas no- is preferred with stems of Iranian, Arabic or international origin. This distribution shows that the prefixal technique in Uzbek has not displaced the suffixal one but has occupied a complementary niche within it [8].

The fourth model is the analogical-serial one, in which a single successful formation generates an open paradigm of further formations built on the same pattern. Once mikroiqtsodiyot had been established, the series was extended to mikroqarz, mikrofirma, mikrokredit, mikroblog and mikroto'lov; once kiberjinoiat had appeared, it was followed by kiberxavfsizlik, kiberhujum, kibermakon and kiberigiyena. The characteristic feature of this model is that the semantic contribution of the formative is constant across the whole series, which makes the meaning of each new member predictable and therefore makes the series open. Serial productivity is the strongest evidence available for treating these formatives as prefixes rather than as compound components, since compounding in Uzbek does not normally produce paradigms of this kind with an invariant first element and a constant semantic relation between the components [9].

The fifth model is the occasional one, characteristic of journalism, advertising and social-media discourse, in which a formative is used for a single expressive purpose and the resulting unit is not intended to enter the lexicon. Formations of this kind are typically written with a hyphen, which signals their non-standard status, and they frequently combine

formatives from different layers or attach an international formative to a stylistically colloquial stem. Occasional formations are important for the description of productivity because they show the outer limits of what the system permits: a formative that appears in occasional coinages is fully available to speakers even if the resulting words are ephemeral. They are also the principal channel through which new formatives enter the language, since a formative that first appears in occasionalisms may later be stabilised in terminology.

The growth of prefixal formations has created an orthographic problem that the current norm has not yet resolved. The same unit may be attested in three graphic forms: solid, hyphenated and separated, as in *mikro qarz*, *mikro-qarz* and *mikroqarz*, or *eko turizm*, *eko-turizm* and *ekoturizm*. The variation is not random but correlates with the degree of assimilation of the formative and with the origin of the stem: formatives long established in the language tend towards solid spelling, whereas recent ones and those attached to native stems retain the hyphen longer. A further complication is created by script variation, since Uzbek is written both in the Latin and in the Cyrillic alphabet and the two traditions have developed slightly different conventions for the same formations. A consistent rule based on the criterion of affixhood, according to which a bound recurrent formative with a stable meaning is written solid with the base, would remove most of the variation and would at the same time record the grammatical fact that these elements have become prefixes of Uzbek [10].

The five models differ not only in productivity but also in the register in which their products first appear, and this has consequences for their prospects of entering the norm. Transplanted borrowings enter through specialised literature and are normalised together with the terminological systems that carry them, so that their acceptance is rarely contested. Hybrid formations enter through professional and administrative discourse and are accepted comparatively quickly when they fill a genuine designative gap, which is why *kiberxavfsizlik* and *mikroqarz* met no resistance: no established Uzbek word covered these concepts. Calques enter through translation and are the most likely to be contested, because a native alternative always exists by definition and the choice between *nostandard* and an analytic construction is therefore open to normative argument. Occasional formations enter through journalism and advertising and are ephemeral by design, although a small

proportion of them stabilise. The general pattern is that a prefixal neologism is accepted in proportion to the size of the designative gap it fills, and that the resistance it meets is proportional to the availability of a native synonym.

CONCLUSION

The material examined shows that prefixation, traditionally regarded as absent from Uzbek, has become a regular although still peripheral word-formation technique of the modern language. The inventory of prefixal formatives comprises three chronological layers: the Iranian layer of *be-*, *no-*, *ba-*, *ser-*, *kam-* and *ham-*, which is old and fully assimilated but only moderately productive with new bases; the Greco-Latin and international layer of *anti-*, *mikro-*, *makro-*, *super-*, *post-* and others, which is the most numerous and is closely tied to terminological systems; and the recent digital and ecological layer of *kiber-*, *veb-*, *eko-*, *nano-* and *e-*, which is the most active in producing neologisms. The traditional claim that Uzbek has no prefixes should therefore be reformulated rather than repeated: the language has no inherited prefixes, but it possesses an expanding set of borrowed prefixal formatives whose behaviour is regular enough to be described in derivational terms.

Five formation models have been established. Transplantation supplies the inventory of formatives without producing neologisms within Uzbek. The hybrid model, which combines a borrowed formative with a native or assimilated stem, is currently the most productive and yields such units as *kiberxavfsizlik* and *mikroqarz*. Calquing renders foreign prefixal formations by means of the Iranian formatives *no-* and *be-* or by analytic constructions, and it has produced a complementary distribution between the prefix *no-* and the suffix *-siz*. The analogical-serial model creates open paradigms with an invariant formative and a constant semantic relation, which is the strongest argument for the prefixal status of these elements. The occasional model marks the outer limit of the system and serves as the entry channel for new formatives.

Two practical conclusions follow. First, lexicographic practice should record the productive formatives as separate dictionary entries with an indication of their combinatorial restrictions, since a speaker who knows the meaning of a formative can produce and interpret an indefinite number of formations with it. Second, the orthographic norm requires a single criterion for the choice between solid, hyphenated and separated spelling; the criterion of affixhood proposed above is

applicable to all three layers and would eliminate the graphic variation that currently affects the most frequent formations. Further research should establish the relative frequency of the formatives in a representative corpus of modern Uzbek and should examine whether the prefixal technique is beginning to affect the inherited layer of the vocabulary.

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