



THE PRINCIPLE OF RELATIVITY AND BINARY OPPOSITION IN UZBEK HYDRONYMY: A STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Sevara Murodova

Teacher, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy, Denau, Uzbekistan. Email: sevara.muradova888@gmail.com

Madina Umirqulova

Teacher, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature,
Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy, Denau, Uzbekistan.
Email: madina.baxtiyorovna@gmail.com

Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 10 th April 2026 Accepted: 8 th May 2026	This paper explores the structural and semantic mechanics of spatial relativity and binary opposition in the Uzbek hydronymic system. In toponymy, the necessity for precise geographical orientation frequently results in the comparative naming of adjacent water bodies. Utilizing a structural-semantic methodology, this study investigates how the "principle of relativity" generates binary semantic oppositions (e.g., large/small, fresh/salty) within Uzbek water names. Furthermore, the research identifies the linguistic phenomenon of toponymic ellipsis, where in generic identifiers are historically dropped for phonetic and communicative economy. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and structural patterns governing antonymic paired hydronyms in agglutinative languages.

Keywords: Binary opposition, hydronymy, spatial relativity, semantic antonymy, toponymic ellipsis, Uzbek language, structural semantics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Toponymic systems are inherently designed to facilitate human orientation within geographical space. Consequently, the naming of geographical objects frequently relies on comparative methodologies. Scholars such as Nikonov (1964) and Dusimov (1984) classify toponymic nomination principles into relative, positive, and negative categories. Among these, the principle of relativity where an object is named in direct comparison to an adjacent orienting object is of paramount importance in hydronymy.

When the principle of relativity is applied, it naturally generates the linguistic phenomenon of opposition. According to Podolskaya (1978), binary opposition in onomastics occurs when a single core lexeme is differentiated by two antonymic words. While binary opposition in Slavic hydronymy has been investigated (Strizhak, 1965), its structural-semantic manifestation in the Uzbek language specifically concerning spatial dimensions, taste, and subsequent morphological ellipsis requires rigorous systemic analysis.

This study aims to elucidate how the principle of relativity functions in Uzbek hydronymy, how it manifests as structural binary opposition, and how diachronic linguistic economy leads to the ellipsis of generic toponymic markers.

2. METHODS

The research is based on a structural-semantic and comparative analysis of Uzbek hydronyms.

Corpus Selection: Paired hydronyms were extracted from the toponymic registers of the Namangan, Fergana, Kashkadarya, and Bukhara regions.

Semantic Opposition Analysis: The selected hydronyms were categorized based on the motivating factor of their opposition (e.g., volume, taste, relative location).

Morphological Analysis: The diachronic evolution of these paired names was examined to identify instances of structural reduction (ellipsis).

Theoretical Framing: The study challenges certain flawed typological classifications (e.g., Qodirova, 1966) by re-establishing the primacy of the relativity principle over superficial geographic descriptors.

3. RESULTS

3.1. The Principle of Relativity in Hydronymy

The data reveals that the principle of relativity in Uzbek hydronymy is primarily based on comparing a specific feature of one water object with another. This comparison relies heavily on the object's location, volume, and water properties (taste/color). Examples include taste-based opposition: Sho'rbuloq (Salty spring) versus Chuchukbuloq (Fresh spring) in the Pop district.



3.2. Binary Opposition Based on Volume and Space

The most prominent manifestation of opposition in the corpus is based on volume and spatial dimensions, utilizing the lexical antonyms Katta (Large/Great) and Kichik (Small/Lesser). In these

contexts, Katta denotes an object of relatively larger volume or scale, while Kichik denotes the contrary.

Significant examples of this binary opposition include:

Katta Norin and Kichik Norin (referring to the upper reaches of the Naryn River).

Katta tog'lik jilg'asi and Kichikina tog'lik jilg'asi (Chust district).

Katta tashlama and Kichik tashlama (Mingbuloq district).

Katta Uradaryo and Kichik Uradaryo (Dehqonobod district).

3.3. Diachronic Ellipsis in Oppositional Hydronyms

A critical structural finding is the occurrence of ellipsis within these oppositional pairs. Over time, the innate linguistic drive for simplicity, convenience, and economy causes the generic hydronymic indicator (the word for spring, lake, etc.) to fall out of use. For instance, historical records indicate the original names were Katta Qaynar buloq (Great Boiling spring) and Kichik Qaynar buloq. Through diachronic linguistic development, the generic term buloq was dropped, resulting in the modern, concise paired hydronyms: Katta Qaynar and Kichik Qaynar (Fergana region). Similarly, Katta sho'rko'l (Great salty lake) evolved simply into Katta sho'r.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings affirm that the principle of relativity is a dominant cognitive mechanism in Uzbek spatial orientation. As Dusimov (1985) correctly noted regarding Khorezm toponyms, relativity is fundamentally tied to the "direction" or "spatial orientation" of the nominator. This refutes earlier theoretical missteps in local onomastics (e.g., Qodirova, 1966), which erroneously classified geomorphological features as an independent "principle" rather than recognizing them as mere motives functioning within the broader principle of positive/relative nomination.

The structural use of Katta and Kichik provides a perfect linguistic mirror of binary opposition (Oxunov, 1986). These are not isolated adjectives but function as vital onomastic determiners that prevent geographical ambiguity. Furthermore, the documented phenomenon of ellipsis highlights the dynamic nature of agglutinative toponymy. The shedding of generic markers (buloq,

ko'l) proves that once a binary opposition is firmly established in the geographical lexicon of a community, the differentiating antonyms (Katta/Kichik) carry enough semantic weight to render the generic noun redundant.

5. CONCLUSION

The Uzbek hydronymic system heavily utilizes the principle of relativity to generate binary oppositions based on scale, location, and physical properties. This comparative naming strategy resolves the cognitive need for spatial orientation by creating paired antonymic hydronyms (e.g., Katta Norin / Kichik Norin). Furthermore, the diachronic evolution of these names demonstrates a strong tendency toward linguistic economy, where generic identifiers are subjected to ellipsis while the core oppositional markers are retained. These findings contribute to the broader theoretical understanding of toponymic opposition and structural reduction in agglutinative languages. Furthermore, the research identifies the linguistic phenomenon of toponymic ellipsis, wherein generic identifiers are historically dropped for phonetic and communicative economy. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and structural patterns governing antonymic paired hydronyms in agglutinative languages.

REFERENCES

1. Dusimov, Z. (1984). Toponimlar nominatsiyasida nisbiylik prinsiplari [Principles of relativity in the nomination of toponyms]. *O'zbek tili va adabiyoti*, 4, 12-15.
2. Dusimov, Z. (1985). Toponimlar nominatsiyasida pozitivlik va negativlik prinsiplari [Positive and negative principles in the nomination of toponyms]. *O'zbek tili va adabiyoti*, 3, 33-37.
3. Oxunov, N. (1986). Toponimlardagi binar oppozitsiya hodisasi [The phenomenon of binary opposition in toponyms]. *O'zbek tili va adabiyoti*, 2, 57-60.
4. Qodirova, Sh. (1966). Toshkent mikrotoponimiyasining nomlanish prinsiplariga doir [On the naming principles of Tashkent microtoponymy]. *O'zbek tili va adabiyoti*, 6, 38.
5. Стрижак, А. С. (1965). Гидронимия Среднеднепровского левобережья. (Автореферат кандидатской диссертации). Киев.
6. Никонов, В. А. (1964). Принципы топонимики. Москва: Наука.



World Bulletin of Social Sciences (WBSS)

Available Online at: <https://www.scholarexpress.net>

Vol. 59, June 2026

ISSN: 2749-361X

7. Подольская, Н. В. (1978). Словарь русской ономастической терминологии. Москва: Наука.