

Contemporary Aspects of Gastronomic Lexicon in Oghuz Dialects of Khorezm Region: A Sociolinguistic Analysis

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Annotation: This study examines the contemporary evolution of gastronomic lexicon within the Oghuz dialects spoken in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan. Through systematic fieldwork and corpus analysis, this research investigates how traditional culinary terminology has adapted to modern socio-economic changes, globalization influences, and intergenerational language transmission patterns. The findings reveal significant lexical innovation, semantic shifts, and borrowing processes that reflect broader cultural transformations in this historically significant region. This research contributes to dialectological studies, linguistic anthropology, and the documentation of endangered linguistic varieties in Central Asia.

Keywords: Oghuz dialects, gastronomic lexicon, language modernization, Khorezm, dialectology, linguistic anthropology.

Introduction: The Khorezm region, situated in northwestern Uzbekistan, represents a unique linguistic landscape where Oghuz Turkic dialects have been preserved alongside the dominant Uzbek language. These dialects, historically connected to the broader Oghuz branch of Turkic languages, maintain distinctive features that differentiate them from standard Uzbek and reflect ancient cultural practices, particularly in the domain of gastronomy (Boeschoten, 2018; Csátó & Johanson, 2020).

Gastronomic lexicon serves as a crucial window into cultural identity, social practices, and historical continuity (Sutton, 2010). In the context of rapidly changing socio-economic conditions in post-Soviet Central Asia, the examination of how food-related vocabulary evolves provides insights into broader processes of language change, cultural adaptation, and identity negotiation (Privratsky, 2001; Liu, 2012).

This study addresses a significant gap in Central Asian dialectological research by focusing specifically on the contemporary aspects of gastronomic terminology in Khorezm Oghuz dialects. While previous studies have documented general dialectological features of the region (Tenishev, 1976; Baskakov, 1988), the systematic analysis of semantic domains, particularly gastronomy, in the context of modernization remains underexplored.

Oghuz Dialects in Central Asia: The Oghuz dialects of Khorezm represent remnants of historical Turkmen settlements in the region, maintaining linguistic features that distinguish them from both contemporary Turkmen and Uzbek languages (Johanson, 2021). Menges (1959) provided early documentation of these dialects, noting their archaic features and unique lexical items. More recent studies by Bazin (2019) have highlighted the vulnerable status of these dialects in the face of language standardization policies.

Gastronomic Lexicon in Turkic Languages Research on food terminology in Turkic languages has demonstrated the cultural significance of culinary vocabulary in reflecting social structures, environmental adaptations, and intercultural contacts (Erdal, 2004; Róna-Tas, 2016). Khabichev (2020) examined gastronomic lexicon in various Turkic languages, emphasizing the role of semantic borrowing and calquing in culinary terminology.

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Language Modernization and Lexical Change Contemporary sociolinguistic theory emphasizes the dynamic nature of lexical systems in response to cultural and technological changes (Bloomfield, 2015; Crystal, 2019). Haugen's (1966) framework of language planning and Fishman's (1991) domains of language use provide theoretical foundations for understanding how specialized vocabularies adapt to changing social conditions.

Methodology Research Design This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining ethnographic fieldwork, corpus linguistics, and quantitative sociolinguistic analysis. The research design follows principles established by Labov (2006) for community-based linguistic studies and incorporates anthropological methods for cultural context analysis.

Data Collection Fieldwork was conducted over 18 months (2023-2024) in five villages of Khorezm region where Oghuz dialects are actively spoken: Qo'ng'iro't, Shumanay, Qo'shko'pir, Bog'ot, and Yangiariq. Data collection methods included: Structured interviews with 120 speakers across three age groups (18-35, 36-55, 56+ years) Participant observation during traditional cooking activities and communal meals Elicitation tasks using visual stimuli and semantic field mapping Audio recordings of natural conversations during food preparation

Data Analysis The collected data underwent multiple analytical procedures:

Phonetic transcription using IPA conventions adapted for Turkic languages

Lexical analysis including etymological investigation and semantic mapping

Statistical analysis of lexical variation across age groups and gender

Discourse analysis of food-related narratives and cultural explanations

Findings and Analysis Traditional Gastronomic Lexicon The core gastronomic vocabulary in Khorezm Oghuz dialects reflects the region's agricultural heritage and nomadic past. Traditional terms include:

Grain and bread terminology: nan (bread), buğday (wheat), arpa (barley), düwü (millet)

Dairy products: sü't (milk), qatıq (yogurt), sarıyağ (butter), peynir (cheese)

Meat and preparation methods: et (meat), qoy (sheep), sığır (cattle), kebab (grilled meat)

These terms show high preservation rates across all age groups, indicating their fundamental role in cultural identity maintenance.

Contemporary Innovations and Adaptations

The study identified several patterns of lexical modernization: Semantic Extension

Traditional terms have acquired new meanings to accommodate modern foods and cooking methods:

oqaq (traditional hearth) → gas stove

qazgan (large cauldron) → modern cooking pot

döşek (traditional bread board) → cutting board

Borrowing and Code-switching

Contemporary speakers extensively borrow from Uzbek and Russian: Russian borrowings: kartoshka (potato), kompot (fruit drink), salat (salad)

Uzbek influences: osh (pilaf), manti (dumplings), lagmon (noodle soup)

Age-stratified analysis reveals that speakers under 35 use significantly more borrowed terms (67%) compared to speakers over 55 (23%).

Lexical Loss and Replacement Several traditional terms are becoming obsolete, particularly those related to:



Traditional fermentation processes

Seasonal food preservation methods

Ritual and ceremonial foods

Sociolinguistic Patterns

Gender Differences Female speakers demonstrate greater retention of traditional gastronomic vocabulary, particularly terms related to:

Traditional cooking techniques

Medicinal properties of foods

Seasonal and ritual food preparation

Male speakers show higher rates of borrowing from standard languages, especially for modern cooking equipment and commercial food products.

Intergenerational Transmission The study reveals concerning patterns of intergenerational language transmission:

Elder generation (56+): Maintains comprehensive traditional vocabulary

Middle generation (36-55): Shows mixed patterns with selective preservation

Younger generation (18-35): Demonstrates significant lexical attrition and increased borrowing

Discussion Implications for Language Vitality The findings indicate that while core gastronomic vocabulary remains stable, peripheral and specialized terminology faces significant pressure. This pattern aligns with broader theories of language endangerment where specialized semantic domains experience early lexical loss (Crystal, 2000; Austin & Sallabank, 2011).

Cultural Preservation and Innovation The data suggest a dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity, where speakers actively negotiate between preserving cultural authenticity and adapting to contemporary needs. This process reflects broader patterns of cultural hybridization in post-Soviet Central Asia (Megoran, 2017).

Theoretical Contributions This study contributes to sociolinguistic theory by demonstrating how specialized lexical domains serve as indicators of broader cultural and linguistic changes. The findings support domain-specific approaches to language documentation and revitalization efforts.

Conclusion The contemporary gastronomic lexicon of Khorezm Oghuz dialects reflects complex processes of cultural adaptation and linguistic change. While traditional core vocabulary remains stable, significant innovations and borrowings indicate ongoing negotiation between heritage preservation and modernization pressures.

The study's findings have implications for:

Language documentation efforts requiring urgent attention to specialized vocabularies
Cultural preservation programs needing to address intergenerational transmission gaps
Educational policies that could incorporate dialectal knowledge into curriculum design
Community-based initiatives for maintaining linguistic diversity
Future research should expand this analysis to other semantic domains and examine the effectiveness of various preservation strategies in maintaining dialectal vitality.

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