EXPRESSION OF TOPONYMS IN UZBEK DICTIONARIES

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Abstract: Toponyms represent an important linguistic and cultural component of language documentation. In Uzbek lexicography, the treatment and representation of toponyms in dictionaries reflect both linguistic realities and cultural identities. This study examines the methodologies and principles underlying the expression of toponyms in Uzbek dictionaries, analyzing a selection of authoritative lexicographic sources. The findings indicate variations in the inclusion, classification, and phonological representation of toponyms, highlighting challenges and recommending improvements in future dictionary editions.

Keywords: Toponyms, Uzbek language, lexicography, dictionaries, geographic names, lexicon

1. Introduction

Toponyms, or place names, hold a significant place in Uzbek linguistic and cultural heritage. Reflecting Turkic roots alongside Persian, Arabic, and Russian influences, toponyms contribute to national identity and geographical knowledge [1: 35]. The representation of toponyms in dictionaries is essential for documenting language and culture, supporting education, and standardizing usage. Despite their importance, Uzbek dictionaries often vary in phonetic transcription, morphological detail, and semantic annotation of toponyms [2: 48].

This study investigates how toponyms are expressed in Uzbek dictionaries, focusing on inclusion criteria, transcription methods, morphological descriptions, and semantic

content. It also discusses the influence of ongoing script reforms on lexicographic practices.

2.Methods

The study conducted a qualitative content analysis of toponym entries from three prominent Uzbek dictionaries: O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati (Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek) [1: 50], O'zbekiston hududining toponimlari lug'ati (Dictionary of Uzbek Toponyms) [3: 12], and Yangi O'zbek So'zligi (New Uzbek Dictionary) [4: 22]. Toponym entries were systematically extracted and analyzed with respect to their selection criteria, phonetic transcription accuracy, morphological information, semantic explanations, and inclusion of cultural or etymological annotations. To augment this analysis, structured interviews were held with three experienced Uzbek lexicographers to gain deeper understanding of the dictionary compilation process, including challenges faced during the treatment of toponyms [5: 67].

Results

Inclusion and Scope.The Toponym Dictionary [3: 12] featured the most comprehensive toponym coverage, listing cities, rivers, mountains, and districts across Uzbekistan. In contrast, general dictionaries focused more on prominent and historically important place names [1: 50]. Some minor or newly formed toponyms were absent, indicating a gap in lexicographic updating [4: 22].

Phonetic Transcription.Phonetic transcription practices varied across dictionaries. Earlier editions predominantly used Cyrillic script without stress or vowel length markings [5: 67]. Later publications started incorporating the Latin script, reflecting Uzbekistan's language reforms [6: 89]. However, phonetic notations—especially stress marks—were inconsistently applied, reducing reliability for pronunciation guidance [7: 29].

Morphological Information.Morphological annotations were generally insufficient. While Uzbek is an agglutinative language with case suffixes affecting toponyms, dictionaries rarely detailed declension patterns or variant forms [8: 107]. The Toponym

Dictionary occasionally provided case forms such as locative or genitive, but these were not systematically applied [3: 45].

Semantic and Cultural Annotation.Semantic definitions tended to be brief geographic locators, for example: "a city in southern Uzbekistan" or "a river flowing through Fergana" [1: 52, 3: 83]. Etymological and cultural context were sparsely included but when present enriched the entries with historical perspective [4: 32]. Such notes enhance the cultural value and user comprehension of Uzbek toponyms [9: 16].

Analyses

The qualitative content analysis of the selected Uzbek dictionaries revealed notable differences in the treatment of toponyms across lexical resources. First, the scope of inclusion varied significantly. The *Dictionary of Uzbek Toponyms* demonstrated the most exhaustive coverage, encompassing both major administrative centers and minor geographic features such as rivers and mountains [3: 15]. Conversely, the *Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek* and *New Uzbek Dictionary* tended to prioritize widely recognized city names and historically prominent locations, thereby limiting geographic diversity [1: 54; 4: 25].

Phonetic transcription emerged as another area of inconsistency. The majority of toponym entries in the *Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek* and the *Dictionary of Uzbek Toponyms* were presented in Cyrillic script, reflecting traditional orthographic conventions; however, neither extensively employed stress marking or vowel length notation, essential acoustic cues for correct pronunciation in Uzbek [1: 57; 3: 18]. The *New Uzbek Dictionary* showed partial adoption of the Latin script in line with recent national reforms but also lacked systematic phonetic details, which may hinder accurate oral rendering by users unfamiliar with the language's phonological rules [4: 27].

Morphologically, dictionary entries rarely included declension paradigms or detailed suffix usage. While some case forms, such as locative and genitive, appeared sporadically in the *Dictionary of Uzbek Toponyms*, this was not consistently applied, and the other two dictionaries were largely silent on morphological variants [3: 22; 1: 60; 4: 29]. This gap

restricts a fuller understanding of how toponyms function grammatically within Uzbek syntax, an agglutinative language where affixation is crucial for meaning.

Semantic descriptions typically confined themselves to brief geographic contextualization — for example, indicating a toponym as "a city in southern Uzbekistan" or "a river flowing near Samarkand" [1: 62; 3: 25]. Cultural and etymological information was generally scarce but was sporadically present in the *Dictionary of Uzbek Toponyms*, offering valuable insights into the historical origins and socio-cultural significance of certain place names [3: 27]. Such annotations enhance user engagement and reinforce the cultural importance of toponyms within the Uzbek lexicon.Insights from lexicographer interviews underscored these findings and added nuance regarding compilation challenges. Informants highlighted the difficulties of standardizing toponym transcription amid ongoing script reforms and pointed to limited resources for comprehensive etymological research [5: 69]. Additionally, rapidly evolving geographic nomenclature due to administrative changes compels frequent dictionary revisions, a logistical challenge that slows timely updating of toponym entries [5: 71].

Overall, the analyses reveal a pressing need for unified transcription guidelines, expanded morphological annotation, and enriched semantic and cultural content to ensure the accurate and holistic lexicographic representation of Uzbek toponyms.

Discussion

The investigation revealed several challenges in addressing toponyms comprehensively in Uzbek dictionaries. First, script reform from Cyrillic to Latin creates inconsistency in transcription practices, complicating standardization efforts [5: 71]. Second, the absence of unified guidelines for phonetic transcription and morphological annotation diminishes the linguistic accuracy of entries [10: 12]. Third, the pace of administrative changes leads to incomplete and outdated toponym listings [4: 22].To resolve these issues, adoption of international frameworks such as the UNGEGN recommendations is crucial for standardizing transcription and notation [11: 3]. Furthermore, expanding morphological details, including systematic case declensions, would increase dictionary usefulness, especially for language learners [8: 107]. Enriching

semantic and etymological annotations supports cultural preservation by contextualizing toponyms historically and socially [9: 16].Digitization and GIS integration in dictionary development present modern solutions, enabling dynamic updates and richer geographic information [10:10].

Conclusion

Uzbek dictionaries demonstrate the cultural importance of toponyms but exhibit variability in phonetic, morphological, and semantic descriptions. Addressing transcription inconsistencies and expanding morphological and cultural annotations will enhance Uzbek lexicography's quality and usability. Coordinating such improvements with digital advances promises to safeguard Uzbekistan's linguistic heritage while meeting modern academic and public needs.

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