



HOMONYMS AND POLYSEMOUS WORDS IN UZBEK LINGUISTICS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Shodmonov Muhammadsodik

Third-Year Student, Faculty of Philology

Alfraganus University

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17365399>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 12th October 2025

Accepted: 14th October 2025

Online: 16th October 2025

KEYWORDS

homonym, polysemous word, polysemy, homophone, homograph, homoform, context, semantics, linguistics, quatrain, lexical meaning

ABSTRACT

This article explores the differences between homonyms and polysemous words in the Uzbek language, highlighting their main features and usage characteristics. Homonyms are words that are identical in form but differ in meaning, while polysemous words refer to a single word with various, interrelated meanings. The article provides various examples, including a quatrain by Babur, to illustrate the role of homonyms in literary works. Additionally, types such as homophones, homographs, and homoforms are explained. The study contributes to revealing the lexical richness of the Uzbek language.

Homonym (from the Greek *homos* – “same” and *onymo* – “name”) refers to words that are identical in form but have different meanings.¹

Although words may be identical in form, their meanings differ depending on the level of speech, and homonymy does not occur at the linguistic unit level. In speech, sometimes words become similar both in form and pronunciation, and their meanings are clarified by the context. For example:

Topgan gul keltirar, topmagan bir bog' piyoz.

Yaxshidan bog' qoladi, yomondan dog'.

Here, the words are identical in form but their meanings are understood through context.²

Homonyms can belong to the same or different parts of speech. They may arise from the similarity of certain words that have existed in the language since ancient times or sometimes from loanwords borrowed from other languages.³

chang (noun; musical instrument) – **chang** (noun; dust)

kuya (noun; black residue in a pot) – **kuya** (noun; insect)

yoymoq (verb; to write with a pen) – **yoymoq** (verb; to spread a tablecloth) – **yoymoq** (verb;

to stretch wings)

tut (noun; type of tree) – **tut** (verb, imperative mood)

¹ Asqarova M. Tilshunoslikka kirish

² Sayfullayeva R. R., Abuzalova M.Q., Mamadaliyeva N.S., YUldasheva D.N. Tilshunoslikka kirish

³ I. Yo'ldoshev, O'. Sharipova Tilshunoslik asoslari

chaqmoq (noun; natural phenomenon – lightning) – **chaqmoq** (verb; to thresh grain)

til (noun; body organ – tongue) – **til** (verb, imperative mood)

tik (noun; thick fabric woven from hemp) – **tik** (verb; to sew a seam on a coat) – **tik** (adverb;

to speak directly or bluntly)

pir (noun; spiritual mentor in Sufism) – **pir** (adjective; old, worn out) – **pir** (imitative word;

sound made by a small bird's wings during flight)

lang (noun; stomach disease) – **lang** (adjective; lame, limping) – **lang** (adverb; The door was ajar.)

Homonyms belonging to the same part of speech retain their homonymy even when grammatically inflected. Cognate words serve as an important tool in artistic expression based on wordplay, such as puns and paronomasia. In Uzbek literature, a type of poem called *tuyuq* is created using cognate words⁴. For example:

Qaddimni firoq mehnati yo qildi

Ko'nglimni g'zm-u anduh o'tiga yoqildi

Holimni sabog'a aytib erdim, ey gul,

Bilmam sanga sharh qilmadi yo qildi.

(Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur)

In Babur's *tuyuq* above, the homonym "**yo qildi**" appears in the same form in each line but conveys different meanings in each context.

In the first line, the homonym "**yo qildi**" means "to stretch like a bow," expressing that the pain of separation bent the body like a bow. In this case, the homonym is a noun.

In the second line, "**yoqildi**" means "to burn," indicating that the heart is burning with sorrow and grief. Here, the homonym is a verb.

In the fourth line, "**yo qildi**" expresses the passive voice, meaning whether the condition or message was conveyed or not is left unclear. This homonym is also a verb.

Words that belong to the same part of speech, have exactly the same spelling and pronunciation, and form a homonymic set within that word class are called **complete** or **absolute homonyms**:

chang (noun; a musical instrument) – *chang* (noun; dust).

Words that belong to different parts of speech and only coincide in some forms are called

partial homonyms:

Qo'y (noun; an animal) – *qo'y* (verb; imperative form). The latter belongs to the verb part of speech.⁵

Homonyms exist in every language. Homonymous words are clearly distinguished by context. For example, in the phrase "**quritib qo'yilgan o'tga o't ketmasin**" (meaning "may fire not catch the dried grass"), it is not difficult to differentiate the meanings of the two instances of "**o't**".

Homonyms are classified into three types based on their spelling and grammatical forms:

⁴ Sayfullayeva R. R., Abuzalova M.Q., Mamadaliyeva N.S., YUldasheva D.N. Tilshunoslikka kirish

⁵ Uzpedia.uz Omonimlar

Homophones: Words that are pronounced the same but differ in some phonemes in their sound structure. For example, in Uzbek: **yetti** (the number seven) and **yetdi** (a verb form meaning "finished" or "arrived"); **bod-bot**, **bob-bop**, **mard-mart**; and in Russian: **naod** (a fruit) and **naom** (a kind of salt).

Omoforms occur in some grammatical forms of different parts of speech. This phenomenon usually happens between words belonging to different word classes. For example, **olma** (noun: apple) and **olma** (verb: don't take), **yor** (noun: companion) and **yor** (verb: to split), and others.

Omoforms lose their homonymy in other grammatical forms. For example, in the sentence "**Yorim dushman safini yorib o'tdi**" ("Half of my enemy's ranks broke through"), the words **yorim** (half) and **yorib** (breaking through) after taking grammatical forms lose their homonymy.

Homographs

These are words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently. For example, **tok** (grapevine) and **tok** (electric current)⁶.

A word is not limited to just one meaning. It can be used in various senses. Words that have more than one meaning are called **polysemous words** or **words with multiple meanings**. The phenomenon of a word having multiple meanings is known as **polysemy**.⁷

Lexical polysemy (from Greek: *poli* – "many" + *semia* – "sign") refers to a lexeme having several meanings. For example, the semantic structure of the lexeme **tuz** (salt) includes the following lexical meanings:

Chemical compounds formed when hydrogen in an acid is replaced by a metal (basic salts, sulfate acid salts);

A type of chemical compound used as food (table salt);

Figurative: someone's food or hospitality provided to another person (to give salt, to eat someone's salt);

Figurative: logic, meaning, sense — as in the phrase "Is there any salt in this woman's words?" (i.e., is there meaning or sense in what she says?) (from 1. Rahim)⁸.

Lexical polysemy is the phenomenon where a single word has multiple, related meanings. In linguistics, polysemy is widespread and reflects the richness and adaptability of language. Polysemy is the ability of a word to develop additional meanings around its core meaning depending on different contexts. Usually, these additional meanings are connected to the primary meaning, i.e., they are semantically related.

How does polysemy arise?

Through metaphor: A word gains a new meaning based on resemblance or figurative comparison.

Example: The word "*eye*" refers to the organ of sight in humans or animals, but also to a water source ("*spring's eye*").

Through metonymy: A new meaning emerges based on close association.

Example: "*Table*" refers to the furniture, but also to the food served on it ("*wedding table*").

⁶ I. Yo'ldoshev, O'. Sharipova Tilshunoslik asoslari

⁷ V. Reshetov, S.I.Ibrohimov, U.T.Tursunov, F.K.Qayumov. Hozirgi o'zbek adabiy tili I "Fan" nashriyoti T – 1996

⁸ H.Jamolxonov Hozirgi o'zbek adabiy tili "Talqin" nashriyoti T – 2005

Dependence on function and context: A word can have different meanings depending on the situation.

Example: “*Wing*” can mean the body part used by birds to fly, the side parts of an airplane, or figuratively, a helper or closest friend.

Types of polysemy:

Related meanings: These are meanings extended from the main one and are closely connected.

Example: “*River*” means a flowing body of water, but can also metaphorically mean a large flow or crowd (“*a river of people*”).

Contextual meanings: A word takes on completely different meanings in different contexts.

Example: “*Fire*” can mean a burning flame or an emotional state (“*fiery love*”).

Polysemy in linguistic formations: Words derived from the same root but used differently in various contexts.

Example: “*Road*” means a transport path or figuratively, a path in life.⁹

From the above, it is clear that **homonyms** are words that have the same pronunciation and spelling but differ in meaning. We saw this in the example of Zahiriddin Muhammad Bobur’s *tuyuq* (poem) above. On the other hand, **polysemous words** (words with multiple meanings) like the example of *tuz* (salt) represent different types of salt but do not belong to different words or word classes as homonyms do. From this, it follows that **homonyms** are words that each have distinct meanings and belong to different word classes, whereas **polysemous words** are different meanings of the same single word used in various contexts.

Conclusion

In the Uzbek language, homonyms and polysemous words are important lexical phenomena that enrich the language’s vocabulary and expressive capabilities. Although homonyms have identical forms, they are considered independent words with completely different meanings, often distinguished through context. Polysemous words, on the other hand, have one primary meaning but are used in various related senses depending on the context. The examples provided in the article, especially those from literary works, clearly illustrate these phenomena. Additionally, the types of homonyms and the ways polysemy arises were also examined. In conclusion, the correct differentiation of these two lexical phenomena holds significant importance both in linguistics and practical speech.

References:

1. Asqarova, M. Introduction to Linguistics. Tashkent: Fan, 2005.
2. Jamolxonov, H. Modern Uzbek Literary Language. Talqin Publishing, Tashkent, 2005.
3. Yo‘ldoshev, I., & Sharipova, O. Fundamentals of Linguistics. Tashkent: Iqtisod-Moliya, 2007.
4. Rixsiboyeva, S., Rahimova, N., & Raxmatullayeva, R. Lexical Monosemy and Polysemy: Essence, Characteristics, and Role in Language. International Journal of Education, Social Science & Humanities. Finland Academic Research Science Publishers.
5. Sayfullayeva, R.R., Abuzalova, M.Q., Mamadaliyeva, N.S., & Yuldasheva, D.N. Introduction to Linguistics. Bukhara: Durdona Publishing, 2021.

⁹ Rixsiboyeva Sevinch, Rahimova Nozima, Raxmatullayeva Ruxshona Leksik monosemiya va polisemiya: mohiyati, xususiyatlari va tildagi o‘rni International Journal of Education, Social Science & Humanities. Finland Academic Research Science Publishers

6.Uzpedia.uz. Homonyms. Available at: <https://uzpedia.uz>

7.Reshetov, V., Ibrohimov, S.I., Tursunov, U.T., & Qayumov, F.K. Modern Uzbek Literary Language I. Fan Publishing, Tashkent, 1996.

