



HOLONYMIC AND MERONYMIC RELATIONS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH PARALINGUISTIC UNITS: A CONTRASTIVE-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Part-whole semantic relations, traditionally examined within the nominal lexicon, remain underexplored as an organising principle of paralinguistic and nonverbal sign systems. This article investigates the holonym-meronym (whole-part) phenomenon as it operates in the description of nonverbal communicative behaviour in Uzbek and English, treating the human body and face as holonyms and their communicatively active components (eyes, eyebrows, lips, hands, shoulders) as meronyms that encode discrete paralinguistic meanings. Drawing on an adapted version of the Winston-Chaffin-Herrmann taxonomy of part-whole relations, the study qualitatively analyses authentic examples drawn from English (British National Corpus, Corpus of Contemporary American English) and Uzbek (O'zbek tilining milliy korpusi, Ziyouz.com) sources together with literary prose. The analysis identifies systematic cross-linguistic asymmetries in which meronymic units are lexicalised and pragmatically foregrounded as autonomous nonverbal signs, with English privileging manual meronyms and Uzbek foregrounding ocular and facial meronyms bound to culturally specific politeness norms. The findings extend holonymy-meronymy theory beyond concrete nominal taxonomies into the semiotics of nonverbal communication and suggest implications for contrastive linguistics, translation, and English for Specific Purposes instruction.

1.Introduction

Paralinguistics, understood since Trager's foundational proposal as the vocal and kinesic accompaniment of speech that carries meaning without belonging to the verbal code proper (Trager, 1958), has developed into a broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the full repertoire of nonverbal behaviour, including facial expression, gesture, posture, gaze, and vocal quality (Ekman & Friesen, 1969; Poyatos, 2002). Within lexical semantics, a parallel and largely independent tradition has examined how words denoting wholes and their constituent parts are related to one another, a relation classically termed meronymy (part) and holonymy (whole) (Cruse, 1986; Lyons, 1977). Winston, Chaffin, and Herrmann (1987) formalised this

relation into a taxonomy comprising component-integral, member-collection, portion-mass, stuff-object, feature-activity, and place-area subtypes, later refined empirically by Chaffin, Herrmann, and Winston (1988), thereby establishing part-whole relations as a systematic, cognitively grounded semantic category rather than a loose metaphorical extension of class inclusion. Although both traditions converge on the human body — paralinguistics as the site where bodily signs are produced, and meronymy as the relation that structures the lexicon of body-part terms — the two fields have rarely been brought into direct dialogue: studies of holonymy-meronymy typically confine themselves to static nominal taxonomies (bicycle-pedal, tree-branch), while studies of paralinguistic and kinesic behaviour rarely make explicit the part-whole architecture that licenses a single component (an eyebrow, a hand, a shoulder) to stand metonymically for, and communicate independently of, the integral whole (the face, the body) of which it is a part. This gap is particularly salient in a contrastive Uzbek-English perspective, where earlier research on the divergence of kinesic and gestural systems between related and unrelated linguistic communities has documented substantial culture-specific asymmetries in which bodily components are conventionally exploited as autonomous nonverbal signs (Abduazizova, 2021), yet without situating these asymmetries within a formal part-whole semantic framework. The present study addresses this gap by asking, first, how the holonym-meronym relation can be productively extended from the nominal lexicon to the description of paralinguistic and kinesic sign systems, and second, whether Uzbek and English differ systematically in which bodily meronyms are conventionally foregrounded as autonomous carriers of nonverbal meaning and in how these meronyms relate to their respective holonyms (face, body). This inquiry forms part of a broader programme of research into the semantic-pragmatic reclassification of paralinguistic means in Uzbek and English, in which holonymy-partonymy is treated as one of several systemic parameters — alongside somatic sign inventories, axiological and gender-specific dimensions, and affirmation-negation marking — that structure nonverbal communication cross-linguistically. Accordingly, the article is organised as follows: the Materials and Methods section describes the corpus sources and the analytical procedure adapted from the Winston-Chaffin-Herrmann taxonomy; the Results section presents the resulting classification of paralinguistic meronyms in the two languages together with illustrative examples; the Discussion interprets these patterns in relation to existing theory and cultural-communicative norms; and the Conclusion summarises the study's contribution and outlines directions for further, quantitatively validated research.

2. Materials and Methods

The study adopts a qualitative, corpus-informed contrastive-semantic design intended to establish an analytical taxonomy rather than to quantify frequency distributions, in keeping with the exploratory stage of a larger dissertation project on paralinguistic and nonverbal communication in Uzbek and English. English-language material was drawn from the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary American English, supplemented by descriptions of nonverbal behaviour excerpted from English-language short fiction; Uzbek-language material was drawn from the O'zbek tilining milliy korpusi (Uzbek National Corpus) and the Ziyouz.com electronic library, supplemented by nonverbal descriptions from Uzbek short prose. From these sources, sentences and phrases in which a bodily component was

explicitly named as the locus or instrument of a communicative act (for example, an eyebrow being raised, a hand being waved, lips being pressed together) were manually extracted and compiled into two parallel working files, one per language. Each extracted unit was then classified along two dimensions: (a) its meronym type, following an adaptation of the Winston-Chaffin-Herrmann (1987) component-integral-object category to the body-face-limb hierarchy (for example, eye-face, hand-arm, lip-mouth), and (b) its holonym level, distinguishing units whose immediate whole is a smaller integral object (the mouth as holonym of the lips) from units whose relevant holonym is the face or the body as a whole, in line with Cruse's (1986) observation that meronymic chains may be nested across several hierarchical levels. Classification was carried out by the researcher and cross-checked against the descriptive categories used in prior comparative work on Uzbek, Russian, and English kinesic systems (Abduazizova, 2021), with borderline cases resolved through dictionary and corpus concordance evidence. Because the present stage of the research is descriptive and classificatory, no inferential statistics were computed; frequency-based and statistically validated comparison (for example, using chi-square or Cramér's V measures, consistent with the quantitative methods employed elsewhere in this research programme) is identified in the Discussion as a necessary next step once a larger, systematically sampled corpus has been compiled. The analytical procedure is therefore best characterised as a form of qualitative content analysis oriented toward semantic classification, combined with a contrastive method that places the resulting Uzbek and English inventories of paralinguistic meronyms side by side in order to identify convergences and divergences in which bodily parts are conventionally lexicalised as autonomous nonverbal signs.

3. Results

The classification yields a coherent set of paralinguistic meronyms organised beneath two principal holonyms, the face and the body, in both languages, while revealing marked differences in which meronyms are most productively exploited as autonomous nonverbal signs. In the English material, manual meronyms are especially prominent: the hand, the fingers, and the palm recur as loci of communicative acts largely independent of accompanying speech, illustrated by expressions such as raising a hand in greeting, clenching a fist in anger, or spreading the palms in a gesture of helplessness, all of which instantiate a component-integral relation in which the hand functions as meronym of the arm and, at a further remove, of the body as holonym. Facial meronyms are also well represented in English, particularly the eyebrow and the mouth, as in the conventionalised expression of raising an eyebrow to signal scepticism or pressing the lips together to signal restraint, but these tend to co-occur with, rather than substitute for, verbal utterance. In the Uzbek material, by contrast, ocular and facial meronyms occupy a comparatively more autonomous communicative role: the eye (ko'z) and the eyebrow (qosh) recur as the primary loci of affective and evaluative meaning, illustrated by expressions such as qoshini chimirmoq (to knit one's eyebrows, signalling displeasure or concentration) and ko'z qisib qo'ymoq (to give a knowing wink), both of which function as culturally conventionalised meronymic signs capable of conveying a complete communicative act with minimal or no accompanying speech, consistent with the broader oculusic emphasis noted in earlier Uzbek paralinguistic research. Manual meronyms are also present in the Uzbek data, most notably the hand and the chest, as in qo'l

qovushtirmoq (to fold one's hands, signalling respect or waiting) and ko'ksiga qo'l qo'ymoq (to place a hand on one's chest, signalling gratitude or sincerity), but here the meronym is frequently embedded within a socially regulated politeness formula rather than functioning, as in the corresponding English hand gestures, as a spontaneous individual expressive act. A further point of contrast concerns the level at which the relevant holonym is invoked: English examples more often relate the active meronym directly to the body as an undifferentiated integral whole, whereas Uzbek examples more frequently pass through an intermediate holonym — the face (yuz) or the chest/heart complex (ko'ngil, yurak) — before reaching the body, suggesting a more elaborated intermediate layer in the part-whole hierarchy underlying Uzbek paralinguistic description. Taken together, these patterns indicate that while the formal part-whole architecture linking bodily meronyms to their holonyms is structurally comparable across the two languages, the two systems differ systematically in which meronyms are conventionally promoted to the status of an autonomous, lexicalised nonverbal sign and in the cultural values — individual affect in English, socially regulated respect and restraint in Uzbek — that these meronyms are recruited to express.

4. Discussion

These findings suggest that the holonym-meronym relation, originally formulated to account for the ordinary-language use of "part of" in nominal taxonomies (Winston et al., 1987; Chaffin et al., 1988), can be meaningfully extended to the semiotics of nonverbal communication, where it captures not merely the anatomical fact that an eyebrow is part of a face, but the semantic-pragmatic fact that a meronym may be promoted to function as an independent sign capable of standing for, and substituting communicatively for, an act that could otherwise involve the holonym as a whole; in this sense, the Uzbek and English data corroborate Cruse's (1986) observation that meronymic relations are graded rather than uniform, since some meronyms (the Uzbek eyebrow, the English hand) are far more communicatively autonomous than others (the earlobe, the elbow), which rarely if ever function as independent paralinguistic signs in either language. The asymmetry identified between English manual and Uzbek ocular-facial dominance is consistent with, and provides a more formally grounded semantic account of, earlier descriptive observations that Uzbek, Russian, and English kinesic systems diverge substantially in which gestures are culturally salient and in how directly they may be interpreted across cultures (Abduazizova, 2021); where that earlier account catalogued individual gestures as culture-specific inventory items, the present analysis suggests that the underlying regularity can be stated more economically as a difference in which node of the body-face-limb meronymic hierarchy each culture conventionally promotes to sign status. The greater prominence of an intermediate holonym (the face, or the chest/heart complex) in the Uzbek material before reaching the body as a whole may further be related to the value placed, in Uzbek communicative norms, on affective and evaluative restraint being lodged specifically in the face and the emotional centre of the body rather than being distributed across more expansive manual and postural behaviour, although this interpretation remains provisional in the absence of quantitative discourse or ethnographic data and should be treated as a hypothesis for future testing rather than an established generalisation; readers should also be cautious against overgeneralising a two-way English-Uzbek contrast onto entire national cultures, since register, genre, age, and

individual variation are known to condition nonverbal behaviour considerably within any single language community. Methodologically, the principal limitation of the present study is its qualitative and non-quantified character: the corpus samples were compiled illustratively rather than through systematic, stratified sampling, and no statistical measure of association, such as chi-square or Cramér's V, was computed to establish that the observed distributional tendencies are robust rather than impressionistic; a further limitation is the reliance on written, largely literary sources, which may foreground stylistically marked nonverbal descriptions rather than the full range of everyday paralinguistic behaviour captured in spoken or multimodal corpora. Despite these limitations, the classificatory framework developed here offers a replicable analytical instrument — the mapping of paralinguistic units onto explicit meronym-holonym pairs — that can be applied to a larger, quantitatively sampled corpus in subsequent research, and it carries practical implications for contrastive lexicography, literary translation, where the substitution of a culturally salient Uzbek ocular meronym with an English manual meronym, or vice versa, may be required to preserve pragmatic equivalence, and for English for Specific Purposes instruction, where explicit attention to which bodily meronyms function as autonomous nonverbal signs in the target language may usefully complement the teaching of verbal communicative competence.

5. Conclusion

This article has argued that the holonym-meronym relation, well established within lexical semantics as an account of part-whole structure in the nominal lexicon, extends productively to the analysis of paralinguistic and kinesic communication in Uzbek and English, where it clarifies how and why particular bodily components come to function as autonomous, culturally conventionalised nonverbal signs rather than as mere anatomical parts of a communicating body. The qualitative contrastive analysis presented here indicates that English paralinguistic description tends to promote manual meronyms (the hand, the fingers) to the status of independent expressive signs, while Uzbek paralinguistic description more frequently promotes ocular and facial meronyms (the eye, the eyebrow) mediated through an intermediate holonym such as the face or the emotional centre of the body, a pattern that is consistent with, and provides a more systematic semantic account of, previously documented divergences between Uzbek, Russian, and English kinesic behaviour. By making explicit the part-whole architecture underlying paralinguistic sign formation, the study contributes a replicable classificatory tool to the broader dissertation programme's aim of reclassifying paralinguistic means in Uzbek and English through a systemic, semantic-pragmatic approach, and it suggests concrete applications in contrastive lexicography, literary and audiovisual translation, and English for Specific Purposes pedagogy, where learners' awareness of which body-part terms function as autonomous nonverbal signs in the target language may be as communicatively consequential as their command of the corresponding verbal lexicon. Future research should build on the present classificatory framework by compiling a larger, systematically stratified corpus of spoken and multimodal Uzbek and English data, applying quantitative and statistical methods — frequency counts, chi-square, and Cramér's V measures of association — to test whether the distributional tendencies identified here hold at scale, and extending the analysis to additional meronym categories, including postural, proxemic, and chronemic units, that were beyond the scope of the present study.

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