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**LEXICAL-SEMANTIC LAYERS IN THE TEXTS OF THE
CRIMINAL CODE²⁸****Rakhmatova Bahora Ibodulla qizi***Senior Lecturer of the Languages-2 Department,**Oriental University,**Independent Researcher**at Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies**Tashkent, Uzbekistan**E-mail: raxmatovabahorai@gmail.com**ORCID ID: 009-0005-0775-4096***ABSTRACT**

This article examines the lexical-semantic layers of Criminal Code texts as a prototypical legislative genre within the legal discourse system. The relevance of the research is determined by the need for precise linguistic interpretation of criminal legislation, since lexical choices directly influence legal qualification and judicial practice. The novelty of the study lies in the systematic classification of lexical-semantic strata in Criminal Code texts, including general literary vocabulary, general legal vocabulary, sectoral criminal law terminology, evaluative-qualifying lexemes, and phraseological constructions with normative meaning. The research aims to identify the structural and semantic features of these layers and to analyze their functional load in shaping the communicative-pragmatic potential of criminal legislation. The methodological framework integrates descriptive, structural-semantic, comparative, and contextual analysis. The results demonstrate that the lexical organization of Criminal Code texts ensures terminological precision, semantic unambiguity, and interpretative stability, while also containing evaluative elements that require doctrinal clarification. The study concludes that lexical-semantic stratification is a key factor in the coherence, authority, and regulatory effectiveness of criminal legislation and serves as a basis for its interpretation and translation.

KEY WORDS

Criminal code text, legal discourse, lexical-semantic layer, legal terminology, evaluative lexeme, interpretation of law, legislative genre, normative semantics.

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JINOYAT KODEKSI MATNLARIDA LEKSIK-SEMANTIK QATLAMLAR

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ANNOTATSIYA

Mazkur maqolada Jinoyat kodeksi matnlarining leksik-semantik qatlamlari huquqiy diskurs tizimidagi prototipik normativ janr sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning dolzarbligi jinoyat qonunini lingvistik jihatdan aniq talqin qilish zarurati bilan belgilanadi, chunki leksik birliklar jinoyatni kvalifikatsiya qilish va sud amaliyotiga bevosita ta'sir ko'rsatadi. Ilmiy yangilik Jinoyat kodeksi matnidagi leksik-semantik qatlamlarning tizimli tasnifi - umumxalq leksikasi, umumhuquqiy leksika, sohaviy jinoyat-huquqiy terminologiya, baholovchi-kvalifikatsiyalovchi birliklar hamda normativ frazeologik konstruksiyalarni ajratishdan iborat.

Tadqiqotning maqsadi mazkur qatlamlarning struktur-semantik xususiyatlarini aniqlash va ularning kommunikativ-pragmatik funksiyasini belgilashdan iborat. Metodologik asos sifatida tavsifiy, struktur-semantik, qiyosiy va kontekstual tahlil usullari qo'llanildi. Natijalar Jinoyat kodeksi matnlarida terminologik aniqlik, semantik bir ma'nolilik va talqin barqarorligi ta'minlanishini ko'rsatadi. Xulosa sifatida leksik-semantik qatlamlanish jinoyat qonunining normativ samaradorligini belgilovchi muhim omil ekanligi asoslanadi.

KALIT SO'ZLAR

Jinoyat kodeksi matni, huquqiy diskurs, leksik-semantik qatlam, huquqiy terminologiya, baholovchi leksika, qonunni talqin qilish, normativ semantika, qonunchilik janri.

ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЕ СЛОИ В ТЕКСТАХ УГОЛОВНОГО КОДЕКСА

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АННОТАЦИЯ

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

В статье рассматриваются лексико-семантические слои текстов Уголовного кодекса как прототипического законодательного жанра в системе юридического дискурса. Актуальность исследования обусловлена необходимостью точной лингвистической интерпретации уголовного законодательства, поскольку лексический выбор непосредственно влияет на квалификацию преступлений и судебную практику. Научная новизна заключается в системной классификации лексико-семантических слоёв текста уголовного законодательства, включающих общеязыковую лексику, общеправовую лексику, отраслевую уголовно-правовую терминологию, оценочно-квалифицирующие единицы и нормативно закреплённые словосочетания.

Цель исследования – выявить структурно-семантические особенности данных слоёв и определить их функциональную нагрузку в формировании коммуникативно-прагматического потенциала уголовного законодательства. Методология включает описательный, структурно-семантический, сравнительный и контекстуальный анализ. Результаты показывают, что лексическая организация текста обеспечивает терминологическую точность, семантическую однозначность и стабильность толкования, одновременно сохраняя элементы оценочности, требующие доктринального разъяснения. Делается вывод о том, что лексико-семантическая стратификация является ключевым фактором нормативной эффективности уголовного закона.

Текст уголовного кодекса, юридический дискурс, лексико-семантический слой, правовая терминология, оценочная лексика, толкование закона, законодательный жанр, нормативная семантика.

INTRODUCTION

The Criminal Code represents the central codified act in the system of criminal legislation. As a legislative genre, it possesses maximum institutional authority and normative force. Its textual organization is characterized by a high degree of lexical standardization, terminological density, and semantic precision. The relevance of the present study is increasing attention to the linguistic foundations of legal interpretation and qualification of crimes. Lexical-semantic analysis becomes particularly significant in contexts where ambiguity or polysemy may affect judicial reasoning.

The aim of this research is to identify and systematize the lexical-semantic layers of Criminal Code texts and to determine their role in ensuring normative clarity and interpretative stability.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a комплексный methodological framework combining qualitative linguistic analysis with elements of comparative legal linguistics. The objective of the methodology is to identify, classify, and interpret the lexical-semantic layers functioning in the texts of the Criminal Code and to determine their structural and pragmatic role in criminal legislation.

The empirical material of the study consists of selected articles from the General and Special Parts of the Criminal Code. For comparative purposes, English and Uzbek legislative texts were analyzed. The selection of material was purposive: provisions containing key criminal law terminology, evaluative-qualifying lexemes, and normative constructions were chosen to ensure representation of different structural components of the Code, including definitional norms, dispositive parts, and sanctioning clauses (Mellinkoff D., 1963, 305).

The research procedure was carried out in several stages. First, lexical units were extracted from the selected legal provisions through continuous sampling. At this stage, attention was paid to recurring terms, formulaic constructions, and semantically marked expressions. Second, the identified units were systematized and classified into lexical-semantic layers according to their functional and semantic characteristics. Third, each layer was subjected to structural-semantic and contextual analysis in order to determine its degree of terminological precision, semantic stability, and interpretative openness. Finally, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify similarities and differences in lexical organization between English and Uzbek criminal legislation.

The descriptive method was used to identify and categorize lexical units functioning in the Criminal Code texts. This allowed for the preliminary establishment of lexical strata and their distribution within the normative structure.

Structural-semantic analysis was applied to examine semantic relations such as hyponymy, synonymy, and polysemy, as well as mechanisms of semantic narrowing characteristic of legal terminology (Tiersma P., 1999, 112). Particular attention was paid to the distinction between general literary vocabulary and sectoral criminal law terminology.

Contextual analysis played a crucial role in determining how polysemantic words acquire specialized meaning within the legal framework. Since many lexical units used in criminal legislation originate from general language, their interpretation depends on statutory definitions, cross-references, and the systemic coherence of the Code. The study therefore examined how contextual restriction mechanisms operate to ensure semantic clarity (Crystal, D., & Davy, D., 1969, 167). The research is guided by the principles of systematicity, normativity, and contextual determinacy. The Criminal Code is treated as an internally coherent legal system in which lexical meaning is shaped not only by dictionary definitions but also by doctrinal interpretation and legislative intent. Such a methodological approach ensures a comprehensive examination of lexical-semantic stratification and provides a reliable basis for evaluating the balance between terminological precision and interpretative flexibility in criminal legislation.

RESULTS

The conducted lexical-semantic analysis of Criminal Code texts demonstrates that their linguistic organization is structured through the interaction of five major lexical layers, each performing a distinct functional role within the normative framework of criminal legislation. The coexistence and systematic interaction of these layers ensure both terminological precision and interpretative adaptability, which are essential for the effective application of criminal law.

First, general literary vocabulary constitutes the foundational lexical stratum of Criminal Code texts. This layer includes neutral, commonly used lexical units such as *person*, *act*, *property*, *damage*, *time*, *place*, and *means*. In ordinary language, these lexemes possess broad and context-dependent meanings; however, within the framework of criminal legislation, they undergo semantic specification. For instance, the word *act* in everyday discourse may denote any action, whereas in criminal law it is implicitly connected to unlawful behavior characterized by social danger and culpability (Endicott T., 2000, 78). Thus, general literary vocabulary functions as a semantic substrate upon which specialized legal meanings are constructed. Its presence ensures comprehensibility and accessibility of legislative texts while simultaneously allowing for contextual narrowing of meaning.

Second, general legal vocabulary forms an intersectoral layer that operates across different branches of law (criminal, civil, administrative, constitutional).

Lexemes such as *liability, responsibility, sanction, jurisdiction, subject, obligation, and legal capacity* are characterized by relative semantic stability and doctrinal consolidation. Although their precise interpretation may vary slightly depending on the legal domain, their core semantic structure remains consistent (McEnery T., & Hardie A., 2012, 155). In Criminal Code texts, these units establish conceptual links with the broader legal system and ensure systemic coherence. They serve as terminological bridges that integrate criminal law into the unified structure of national legislation.

Third, the central and most specialized component is sectoral criminal law terminology. This layer comprises strictly defined terms whose meanings are normatively or formally fixed, either directly in the General Part of the Criminal Code or through established legal doctrine and judicial interpretation. Terms such as *crime, guilt, intent, negligence, complicity, recidivism, attempt, motive, and object of crime* represent key conceptual categories of criminal law. Their semantic boundaries are precisely delineated to prevent ambiguity in qualification and sentencing. Unlike general vocabulary, these terms function within a rigid definitional framework. Their codified nature ensures legal certainty, uniform interpretation, and predictability of judicial decisions (Šarčević S., 2000, 87). This layer forms the conceptual (core) of criminal legislation.

Fourth, evaluative-qualifying lexemes introduce a distinct semantic dimension into Criminal Code texts. Expressions such as *substantial harm, grave consequences, significant damage, large scale, or serious injury* belong to semantically open categories. Unlike strictly defined terms, these lexemes lack exhaustive quantitative or qualitative parameters within the text of the law itself. Their interpretation depends on judicial doctrine, precedent, explanatory resolutions of higher courts, and established law-enforcement practice. Functionally, they allow the legislator to account for the diversity of factual circumstances that cannot be fully anticipated in normative drafting. At the same time, they create zones of interpretative discretion, requiring courts to balance the principle of legality with the need for contextual justice. Therefore, this layer serves as a mechanism of controlled flexibility within an otherwise rigid normative system.

Fifth, normative phraseological constructions represent the formulaic and syntagmatic layer of criminal legislation. Stable constructions such as *shall be punished by, is subject to criminal liability, shall entail deprivation of liberty, in accordance with this Code, and for a term of* function as structural markers of legislative style. These phraseological units ensure standardization, textual cohesion, and uniformity of legal expression. They reduce the risk of interpretative divergence by employing conventionalized syntactic patterns. From a stylistic perspective, this

layer reflects the impersonal, prescriptive, and imperative character of criminal law discourse (Bhatia K., 1993, 134). From a pragmatic perspective, it signals the normative force and binding nature of the provisions.

The interaction of these five lexical-semantic layers produces a complex linguistic architecture. General literary vocabulary guarantees communicative accessibility; general legal vocabulary ensures systemic integration; sectoral criminal terminology provides conceptual precision; evaluative lexemes introduce necessary interpretative elasticity; and normative constructions maintain formal standardization and legislative authority (Solan M., 2010, 103). Together, they create a balanced structure in which rigidity (through definitional exactness and formulaic expression) coexists with flexibility (through evaluative categories and contextual interpretation).

Consequently, the lexical composition of Criminal Code texts reflects the dual nature of criminal law itself: it must be both strictly determinate in order to safeguard the principle of legality and sufficiently adaptable to address the variability of social reality. The stability of the legal system depends precisely on this linguistically mediated equilibrium between semantic certainty and interpretative openness.

DISCUSSION

The lexical-semantic stratification identified in Criminal Code texts confirms that criminal legislation is not merely a collection of legal prescriptions but a carefully structured linguistic system designed to reconcile two fundamental requirements: terminological precision and functional adaptability. On the one hand, the presence of strictly defined sectoral terminology guarantees legal certainty, predictability of interpretation, and compliance with the principle of legality. On the other hand, the inclusion of evaluative and semantically open lexemes enables the law to respond to the factual diversity and complexity of real-life situations. (Cao D., 2007, 67). This dual structure reflects the inherent tension within criminal law between rigidity and flexibility.

Sectoral criminal law terminology—such as *crime*, *guilt*, *intent*, *negligence*, or *recidivism*—serves as the conceptual backbone of the Code. These terms are doctrinally elaborated and normatively established within the General Part of the legislation. Their semantic scope is deliberately narrowed and stabilized in order to minimize interpretative fluctuation. In this respect, terminology functions as a mechanism of legal stabilization: it reduces ambiguity, structures legal reasoning, and ensures consistency in judicial qualification of acts (Garner B. 2011, 187). Without such terminological precision, the application of criminal law would risk becoming arbitrary and unpredictable.

At the same time, the legislative text cannot be constructed exclusively from rigidly defined concepts. Social reality is dynamic, and criminal behavior manifests itself in highly variable forms. This explains the systematic presence of evaluative-qualifying lexemes such as *substantial harm*, *grave consequences*, or *significant damage*. These expressions introduce a controlled degree of semantic openness into the normative framework. Their interpretation depends on judicial doctrine, explanatory resolutions of higher courts, and established law-enforcement practice. (Mellinkoff D., 1963, 152; Tiersma P., 1999, 78). Thus, evaluative vocabulary operates as a pragmatic instrument that allows courts to individualize responsibility while remaining within the boundaries of statutory regulation. It ensures that the law remains sensitive to contextual nuances without undermining the principle of legality.

From a pragmalinguistic perspective, the Criminal Code text performs a clearly defined directive-regulative function. Its communicative purpose is not descriptive but prescriptive: it establishes behavioral models, prohibits socially dangerous acts, and determines sanctions for violations. The lexical composition of the Code reflects institutional authority and communicative asymmetry between the legislator and the addressee. The legislator occupies a dominant institutional position, formulating norms in an impersonal and categorical manner, while the addressee (citizen, law-enforcement body, court) is positioned as the obligated party. This asymmetry is linguistically manifested through imperative and modal constructions, formulaic phraseology, and the absence of dialogic markers. The text does not negotiate meaning; it imposes normative standards.

A comparative analysis of English and Uzbek criminal legislation reveals notable differences in linguistic strategies used to express normativity. English criminal statutes traditionally rely on explicit modal verbs such as *shall* and *may*, which directly encode obligation, prohibition, or discretion. The modal system functions as a transparent marker of normative force. For example, the use of *shall* typically signals mandatory provisions, whereas *may* indicates discretionary authority. In contrast, Uzbek legislative texts often achieve normative effect through syntactic nominalization and participial constructions. Instead of overt modal verbs, obligation and liability are frequently expressed through impersonal forms and deverbal nouns, which contribute to a more structurally condensed and formally detached style. This structural divergence reflects broader typological differences between analytic (English) and agglutinative (Uzbek) linguistic systems, as well as distinct legislative drafting traditions.

Another important aspect concerns the presence of polysemantic general vocabulary within Criminal Code texts. Words such as *act*, *harm*, *means*, or *object*

inherently possess broad semantic potential in ordinary language. If left unrestricted, such polysemy could generate interpretative uncertainty. However, criminal legislation mitigates this risk through contextual restriction mechanisms. These include statutory definitions provided in the General Part of the Code, systematic cross-references between articles, and the hierarchical organization of norms. Through definitional norms and systemic coherence, the Code constructs a closed semantic environment in which general vocabulary acquires specialized, context-bound meaning (Gotti M., 2012, 267). In other words, polysemy is not eliminated but disciplined through normative framing.

In sum, the lexical-semantic organization of Criminal Code texts reflects a sophisticated balance between stability and adaptability. Terminological precision safeguards legal certainty; evaluative lexemes provide interpretative flexibility; modal and syntactic mechanisms encode institutional authority; and contextual restriction ensures semantic coherence. Together, these features demonstrate that criminal legislation functions as a highly regulated communicative system in which language serves not only as a vehicle of meaning but as an instrument of legal regulation itself.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that lexical-semantic layers form the structural foundation of Criminal Code texts. Criminal legislation is linguistically stratified, and each lexical layer performs a specific regulatory function within the normative system.

This stratified organization ensures terminological precision, as sectoral criminal law terms (e.g., *crime*, *guilt*, *intent*) are clearly defined and doctrinally fixed. It also promotes semantic unambiguity, since general vocabulary is contextually restricted through statutory definitions and systemic coherence of the Code. Furthermore, it guarantees interpretative stability: stable terminology and formulaic constructions limit arbitrary interpretation, while evaluative lexemes are guided by judicial doctrine and practice. Finally, lexical layering strengthens normative effectiveness, as precise and standardized language reinforces the directive-regulative function of the Criminal Code.

The interaction between specialized terminology and evaluative lexemes creates a dynamic semantic system. Terminology ensures legal certainty and conceptual clarity, whereas evaluative expressions introduce necessary flexibility, allowing adaptation to diverse factual circumstances without undermining the principle of legality.

Future research may focus on corpus-based quantitative analysis of lexical frequency and distribution in Criminal Code texts, as well as on translation

equivalence between English and Uzbek criminal legislation, particularly in relation to sectoral terminology and evaluative categories.

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