



Connotation And Pejorativity: Analysis And Classification

Zaripova Matluba Qulfitdinovna

PhD., Department of Foreign Languages, Termez State University,
Uzbekistan

OPEN ACCESS

SUBMITTED 30 August 2025

ACCEPTED 24 September 2025

PUBLISHED 28 October 2025

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue10 2025

COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Original content from this work may be used under the terms
of the creative commons attributes 4.0 License.

Abstract: Language is not merely a neutral medium of communication; it carries emotional, social, and cultural values. Words convey not only denotative meanings but also connotative shades that influence interpretation. This paper explores the concepts of connotation and pejorativity, their interrelations, and classifications within the framework of modern linguistics. Based on examples from English and Uzbek, the study aims to identify semantic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic aspects of pejorative connotations, highlighting how language reflects societal attitudes and values.

Keywords: Connotation, pejorativity, semantics, pragmatics, lexical meaning, emotive value, classification.

Introduction: Every language reflects the worldview, emotions, and attitudes of its speakers. Words do not exist in isolation but function within a network of associations, implications, and evaluative overtones. The term connotation refers to the emotional or cultural associations attached to a word beyond its dictionary definition (denotation).

Pejorativity, in turn, refers to the tendency of words to acquire negative evaluative meanings over time. For example, the English word *silly* originally meant “happy” or “blessed,” but later developed a pejorative sense — “foolish” or “stupid.” The study of such semantic shifts is crucial for understanding language change, social attitudes, and communicative nuance.

The study of connotation dates back to early semanticists such as C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards (1923), who distinguished between denotation and connotation in *The Meaning of Meaning*. Later, scholars like Geoffrey Leech (1974) emphasized affective and social meaning as part of connotation.

According to Lyons (1977), connotation reflects “the

socio-cultural associations which a lexical item evokes.” Similarly, Ullmann (1962) classified connotations into emotive, evaluative, stylistic, and collective types. These frameworks reveal that connotation is an inherent part of the communicative value of words.

Pejorativity, a narrower concept, has been studied within the theory of evaluative semantics (Wierzbicka, 1992; Allan & Burridge, 2006). It denotes the negative emotional coloring attached to a word due to social taboos, cultural stereotypes, or semantic degradation.

Semantic and Pragmatic Aspects of Connotation

Connotation operates at both the semantic and pragmatic levels.

- At the semantic level, it reflects the emotional coloring embedded in a word’s meaning (e.g., home vs. house).
- At the pragmatic level, it conveys speaker attitude and social positioning (e.g., slim vs. skinny).

Leech (1981) distinguishes several kinds of connotative meaning:

1. **Affective connotation** – expressing speaker’s emotion (beloved, disgusting).
2. **Evaluative connotation** – showing approval or disapproval (progressive, backward).
3. **Social connotation** – indicating social class or context (chap, gentleman).
4. **Stylistic connotation** – reflecting formality or informality (kid vs. child).

These nuances make language a flexible instrument for expressing attitudes and identities.

Pejorativity as a Linguistic Phenomenon

Pejorative meaning often emerges through semantic shift — a change in meaning from neutral or positive to negative. For instance:

- Villain once meant “farm worker,” now it means “criminal.”
- Hussy originally referred to “housewife,” now means “immoral woman.”

Such shifts occur due to social judgments and power dynamics. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), pejoration reflects “the moral and ideological structure of society.” Words associated with lower status groups, women, or minorities tend to become pejorative over time.

In Uzbek, a similar process can be seen:

- Qo’pol (‘rough’) → used pejoratively to describe rude behavior.
- Bozorchi ayol (‘market woman’) → often connoted as “noisy” or “ill-mannered.”

These examples reveal how pejorativity is culturally constructed and context-dependent.

Classification of Pejorative Connotations

Pejorative connotations can be classified according to linguistic level, origin, and function:

A. Linguistic Level:

1. Lexical pejoratives – individual words with inherent negative meaning (liar, idiot).
2. Morphological pejoratives – formed with negative affixes (-ish, -y, un-, dis-): childish, ungrateful.
3. Contextual pejoratives – neutral words that become negative in context (woman in “She’s just a woman”).

B. Origin:

- Cultural pejoratives – shaped by stereotypes (e.g., spinster).
- Social pejoratives – linked to class or status (servant, peasant).

C. Function:

- Expressive – convey strong emotion (stupid, filthy).
- Persuasive – influence opinion (lazy immigrants).

This taxonomy highlights how pejorativity is both linguistic and ideological in nature.

Comparative Analysis: English and Uzbek

Both English and Uzbek languages reflect social hierarchies and gender roles through pejorative expressions.

English	Neutral Meaning	Pejorative Meaning
<i>Spinster</i>	unmarried woman	undesirable old woman
<i>Coward</i>	cautious person	weak, shameful person
<i>Ambitious</i>	goal-oriented	selfishly determined

Uzbek	Neutral Meaning	Pejorative Meaning
<i>Bozorchi ayol</i>	woman working in market	loud, ill-mannered
<i>Yolg'iz ayol</i>	unmarried woman	socially pitied
<i>Oddiy odam</i>	modest person	uneducated, low status

These examples illustrate that pejorativity often targets gender, occupation, or social rank — reflecting cultural values in both societies.

CONCLUSION

Connotation and pejorativity play essential roles in shaping the expressive and evaluative power of language. While connotation enriches meaning through emotional and cultural associations, pejorativity demonstrates how social prejudice and ideology influence linguistic change.

A comparative approach to English and Uzbek reveals that both languages manifest similar mechanisms of semantic degradation but differ in cultural motivations. Understanding these processes is vital for linguistic analysis, intercultural communication, and language teaching.

REFERENCES

1. Allan, K., & Burrige, K. (2006). *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Leech, G. (1974). *Semantics: The Study of Meaning*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
3. Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics (Vol. 2)*. Cambridge University Press.
4. Ogden, C. K., & Richards, I. A. (1923). *The Meaning of Meaning*. London: Routledge.
5. Ullmann, S. (1962). *Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell.
6. Wierzbicka, A. (1992). *Semantics, Culture, and Cognition*. Oxford University Press.
7. Akhmedova, S. (2020). *Semantic Features of Evaluative Vocabulary in Uzbek*. Tashkent: UzSWLU Press.
8. Karimova, D. (2022). Pejorative Expressions in Uzbek and English: A Comparative Study. *Termez State University Journal of Philology*, 3(2), 44–53.