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Морфологические особенности и уровень использования суффикса -тарин/-тарин в выражении превосходной степени таджикского прилагательного (на примере романа «Гуломон» С. Айни)

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются вопросы, связанные с морфологическими особенностями и уровнем использования суффикса -тарин/-тарин в выражении превосходной степени таджикского прилагательного. Эмпирической основой данного исследования является канонический роман Садриддина Айни «Гуломон» (2019), текст, представляющий собой эталон современного таджикского литературного языка. Результаты показывают, что суффикс -тарин/-тарин демонстрирует значительную продуктивность в языке Айни, проявляя специфические модели образования и использования, отражающие как традиционные персидские морфологические нормы, так и динамические тенденции развития таджикского литературного языка XX в. Исследование показывает, что суффикс -тарин/-тарин в анализируемом корпусе не только выполняет свою основную функцию выражения превосходной степени, но и развивает дополнительные семантические нюансы, особенно в своих субстантивированных формах. Исследование способствует пониманию исторического развития таджикской морфологии прилагательных и предоставляет эмпирические данные для сравнительных исследований различных периодов таджикского литературного языка.

Ключевые слова: прилагательное, превосходная степень прилагательного, суффикс -тарин/-тарин, морфологические особенности, уровень употребления, «Гуломон», С. Айни, таджикский язык

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Morphological Features and the Level of Usage of the Suffix -тарин/-tarin in the Expression of Superlative Degree of Tajik Adjective (on the example of “Ghulomon” by S. Aini)

Abstract: The given article dwells on the issues beset with the morphological features and the level of usage of the suffix -тарин/-tarin in the expression of the superlative degree of the Tajik adjective. The empirical basis for this research is Sadriddin Aini's canonical novel “Ghulomon” (2019), a text that represents the benchmark of the modern Tajik literary language. The findings reveal that the suffix -тарин/-tarin demonstrates considerable productivity in Aini's language, exhibiting specific patterns of formation

and usage that reflect both traditional Persian morphological norms and the dynamic tendencies of the evolving Tajik literary language of the 20th century. The study highlights that the suffix -тарин/-tarin in the analyzed corpus fulfills not only its primary function of expressing the superlative degree but also develops additional semantic nuances, particularly in its substantivized forms. The research contributes to the understanding of the historical development of Tajik adjectival morphology and provides empirical data for comparative studies across different periods of the Tajik literary language.

Key words: adjective, superlative degree of adjective, suffix -тарин/-tarin, morphological features, level of usage, “Ghulomon”, S. Aini, Tajik language

1. INTRODUCTION

The category of degrees of comparison of adjectives represents one of the fundamental morphological categories in the Tajik language, reflecting the language’s capacity to express gradation of qualities and properties. In modern Tajik literary language, the comparative degree is formed by means of the suffix -тар/-tar, while the superlative degree is expressed through the suffix -тарин/-tarin [3].

The study of these morphological markers across different historical periods provides valuable insights into the evolution of the Tajik language and its stylistic resources.

The main purpose of the article is to identify and analyze the morphological features and the level of usage of the suffix -тарин/-tarin in expressing the superlative degree of the Tajik adjective based on the material of Sadriiddin Aini’s novel “Ghulomon”. The research aims to determine the frequency, functional distribution, and specific patterns of usage of this suffix in the language of a canonical work of Tajik literature.

The genesis of the article stems from the observation that while the system of degrees of comparison in Tajik has been described in general terms in academic grammars, detailed corpus-based studies of specific morphological markers in individual literary works remain insufficient. Previous research on the superlative degree in Tajik has covered various historical periods, including the 12th century, the 17th–18th centuries [7], and the 18th–20th centuries [8; 9; 10]. However, the language of Sadriiddin Aini, particularly his novel “Ghulomon”, has not been subjected to a systematic analysis with regard to the usage of the suffix -тарин/-tarin. This gap in scholarship motivates the present investigation.

The functions of the article are threefold: firstly, to provide a comprehensive description of the morphological behavior of the suffix -тарин/-tarin in the selected corpus; secondly, to determine the frequency and productivity of this suffix in comparison with data from other historical periods; and thirdly, to identify the functional-semantic variants of formations with -тарин/-tarin, including their potential for substantivization and their syntactic behavior in context.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the principles of morphological analysis as applied to the Iranian languages and builds upon the existing body of research on Tajik historical morphology. The research adopts a corpus-based approach, treating “Ghulomon” as a representative sample of the Tajik literary language of the 20th century.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The present study employs a descriptive-analytical and quantitative research design. The methodology is grounded in the principles of corpus linguistics and morphological analysis, allowing for both the identification of linguistic forms and the interpretation of their functional and semantic characteristics in context.

The primary corpus of our study is the novel “Ghulomon” by Sadriiddin Aini, a seminal work of modern Tajik literature. The novel was originally published in the Tajik language and republished in 2019 by “Адабиёти бачагона” publishing house in Dushanbe [1]. “Ghulomon” was selected for this study due to its status as a literary classic, its rich and varied language reflecting the norms of the modern Tajik literary language, and its extensive narrative scope, which provides a suitable basis for exploring morphological features and their usage patterns.

The choice of this particular work is further justified by the fact that Sadriiddin Aini (1878–1954) is widely recognized as the founder of modern Tajik Soviet literature, and his language is considered normative for the Tajik literary language of the 20th century. The novel “Ghulomon” (Slaves), written in the 1930s, depicts the life of the Tajik people before the October Revolution and is characterized by a rich vocabulary and diverse stylistic resources.

Limitations

This study is limited to the analysis of a single literary work, which, while representative, cannot capture the full range of usage of the suffix -тарин/-tarin in the Tajik literary language of the 20th century. Future research should extend the analysis to other works by Sadriiddin Aini and to other authors of the same period to provide a more comprehensive picture.

3. MAIN RESULTS

The systematic analysis of the novel “Ghulomon” by Sadriiddin Aini revealed a total of 35 instances of the suffix -тарин/-tarin used to express the superlative degree of adjectives. This finding is consistent with the data reported by Ashrapov, who identified 35 occurrences (69 %) of this suffix in the language of the historical production [1] as compared to other analyzed periods.

The identified examples exhibit considerable diversity in terms of the lexical bases to which the suffix is attached and the syntactic functions performed by the resulting formations. Below, we present the examples grouped according to their structural and functional characteristics.

3.1. QUALITATIVE ADJECTIVES FORMING THE SUPERLATIVE DEGREE

The most frequent type of formation involves qualitative adjectives expressing various properties and qualities. These formations function primarily as attributes modifying nouns.

Example 1: *Ин ҳол зеботарин иморати он биёбон будани ин биноро нишон меод, ки барои дафъи захми чашми бад он чизҳоро ба болои ин иморат гузоштаанд* [1: 3].

In this example, the adjective *зеботарин* (most beautiful) is formed from the qualitative adjective *зебо* (beautiful) by the addition of the suffix *-тарин*. The formation functions attributively, modifying the noun *иморат* (building/structure). The superlative form establishes an implicit comparison between this particular building and all other structures in the desert, asserting its superiority in terms of beauty. The context

suggests that the superlative evaluation is not merely descriptive but also carries cultural significance, as the beauty of the building is linked to the apotropaic function of the objects placed upon it.

Example 2: Кафтарон дар ин айвон чо гирифта моҳ ба моҳ тухм пахш карда бача бароварда, шумораи худро зиёд намуда, барои ин боғ *аълотарин поруҳои* хайвониро тайёр карда медоданд [1: 11].

The formation *аълотарин* (finest / best) is particularly noteworthy from a morphological perspective. It is derived from the Arabic-origin adjective *аъло* (excellent / superior), which itself represents the relative form in Arabic. The addition of the Tajik superlative suffix *-тарин* to an already comparative / superlative form from Arabic demonstrates the integration of Arabic lexical material into the Tajik morphological system. This phenomenon, known as “double marking” of the superlative, reflects the historical layering of morphological resources in Tajik. In this context, *аълотарин* emphasizes the exceptional quality of the manure as the best possible fertilizer for the garden.

Example 3: Дар сафари қалъа *аълотарини панҷсад* шутуре, ки дар зери дасти қорвонбошии Вардонзе чамъ мешаванд, шутурҳои мананд [1: 57].

This second instance of *аълотарин* exhibits a different syntactic pattern. Here, *аълотарини* (with the enclitic *-и* indicating the *izafet* construction) is followed directly by the quantified noun phrase *панҷсад шутуре* (five hundred camels), functioning as a superlative within a partitive construction. The meaning is “the finest among the five hundred camels.” This usage demonstrates that formations with *-тарин* can participate in complex noun phrases where the standard of comparison is explicitly mentioned.

3.2. SUBSTANTIVIZED SUPERLATIVE FORMS

A significant number of examples in the corpus involve formations with *-тарин* that have undergone substantivization, i. e., they function as nouns rather than as adjectives modifying nouns. This pattern is particularly frequent with the form *бештарин* (most / majority), which appears multiple times throughout the novel.

Example 4: Акнун ба тарафи биёбон камтар нигоҳ мекард, *бештарини вақташро* ба ёзида хобидан мегузаронид [1: 15].

The form *бештарин* is derived from the qualitative adjective *беш* (more/much). In this context, *бештарини* (with the *izafet*) functions as a quantifier, meaning “most of” or “the greater part of.” It is followed by the noun *вақташро* (his time in the accusative), forming a quantifier-noun construction. This usage represents a transitional stage between adjectival and nominal function, where the superlative form retains its modifying relationship with the following noun while assuming the syntactic position typically occupied by nouns.

Example 5: *Бештарини онҳо* занон ва духтарони зебо, ҷавонони пурқуввати расо ва ғуломбачагони хушсимоанд [1: 36].

In this example, *бештарини онҳо* (most of them) functions as the subject of the sentence. The superlative form *бештарин* is followed by the pronoun *онҳо* (them) in an *izafet* construction, creating a partitive phrase. The entire phrase *бештарини онҳо* is nominal in function, serving as the topic about which a predication is made. This pattern demonstrates the full substantivization of the superlative form, which now occupies the subject position and governs a following pronoun in a genitive-like relationship.

Example 6: Ғулом ва канизонро ба таҳхонаҳо дароварда ҳабс карданд. Ба пой *баъзе саркаштарини онҳо* кунда заданд, баъзеҳояшонро ишкел зада сари ишкелро аз ҳалқай мехҳои оҳанин гузаронида қулф карданд [1: 37].

The formation *саркаштарин* is derived from the compound adjective *саркаш* (rebellious / lit. head-drawer), which consists of the noun *сар* (head) and the present stem *каш* (draw/pull). The addition of the superlative suffix *-тарин* yields the meaning “most rebellious.” In this context, *саркаштарини онҳо* (the most rebellious among them) functions as a substantivized superlative, referring to a subset of the slaves. The phrase is partitive in meaning and occupies the object position (governed by the preposition *ба*). This example illustrates that substantivization is not limited to *бештарин* but occurs with other superlative forms as well.

3.3. SUPERLATIVE FORMS IN SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXTS

Some examples in the corpus reflect the socio-political themes of the novel, particularly the emergence of revolutionary consciousness among the oppressed classes.

Example 7: ...дар ин қатор аз деҳқонони ғўзақор, ки дирӯз *бештаринашон* нули ғўзаи ба бой фурӯхташонро ба ҳисоби «қарз» ба худи бой гардонда дода буданд, низ менамуданд [1: 55].

This example features the form *бештаринашон* (most of them), which represents *бештарин* + the enclitic pronoun *-ашон* (their). This construction is functionally equivalent to *бештарини онҳо* but more compact. The enclitic pronoun indicates the group from which the majority is taken, creating a partitive meaning. The context describes the exploitation of peasants through the debt system, and the superlative form emphasizes that this practice affected the majority of the peasant population.

Example 8: – *Бештарини болшевикон* аз рабочиҳои фабрик ва завод баромадаанд [1: 201].

This example is particularly significant for its thematic content. The form *бештарини болшевикон* (most of the Bolsheviks) refers to the social composition of the Bolshevik party. The substantivized superlative emphasizes the proletarian origins of the majority of Bolsheviks, aligning with the ideological message of the novel. Linguistically, this example demonstrates the application of the substantivized superlative pattern to a politically charged noun (*болшевикон*), showing the integration of new socio-political vocabulary into existing morphological patterns.

3.4. SUPERLATIVE FORMS IN QUOTED SPEECH AND PROVERBS

The novel incorporates various instances of quoted speech, including religious sayings and proverbial expressions, which contain superlative formations.

Example 9: Пайғамбарамо «касби тичорат *беҳтарини касбҳост* ва тоҷирон ашрафи халқуллоҳ» гуфтаанд [1: 91].

This example contains two superlative formations. The first, *беҳтарин* (best), is derived from the irregular comparative adjective *беҳтар* (better), which itself is based on the suppletive stem *бех* (good). The formation *беҳтарини касбҳост* (is the best of professions) follows the partitive pattern, with the superlative form governing the plural noun *касбҳо* (professions) in the *izafet* construction. The second formation, *ашраф*, represents a different morphological type. *Ашраф* (noblest) is the Arabic relative form of the adjective *шариф* (noble). Unlike *аълотарин* in Example 2, this form does not take the Tajik suffix *-тарин* but maintains the Arabic morphological pattern. The juxtaposition of these two types – one with the Tajik suffix and one with the Arabic relative – illustrates the coexistence of different morphological resources for expressing the superlative in Tajik.

3.5. SUPERLATIVE FORMS EXPRESSING EXTREME DEGREES

Some examples in the corpus use the suffix -тарин to express not merely the highest degree in a comparison but an extreme or absolute degree of a quality.

Example 10: – он воќеа як чизест, ки ба яке аз *сиёҳтарин рӯзҳои* аз сари ман гузашта дахлдор аст [1: 108].

The formation *сиёҳтарин* (blackest) is derived from the color adjective *сиёҳ* (black). While color adjectives typically denote objective properties, in this context *сиёҳтарин рӯзҳо* (the blackest days) is a metaphorical expression indicating extreme misfortune or sorrow. The superlative form intensifies the metaphorical meaning, conveying that these were days of exceptional hardship. The construction *яке аз сиёҳтарин рӯзҳо* (one of the blackest days) explicitly places the referent within a set of comparable entities while emphasizing its extreme position within that set.

Example 11: ...аминҳои аз вай обхӯранда *ҷои ободтарини* тумани Шофирком ҳисоб меёфтааст [1: 116].

The formation *ободтарин* (most prosperous) is derived from the adjective *обод* (prosperous / inhabited). The superlative form is followed by the *izafet* and the noun phrase *тумани Шофирком* (the Shofirkom district), indicating the domain within which the comparison holds. The phrase *ҷои ободтарини тумани Шофирком* (the most prosperous place of the Shofirkom district) illustrates the typical attributive function of the superlative, where the modified noun (*ҷой* – place) is followed by the superlative adjective and then by a locative specification.

3.6. SUPERLATIVE FORMS IN CHARACTER SPEECH

The novel's dialogues provide additional examples of superlative usage, reflecting the speech patterns of different characters.

Example 12: – Ин тавр бошад, ман *бадтарини онҳоро* номбар мекунам, шумо нависед, – гуфт Мулло-Наврӯз ба мутааввали [1: 147].

The formation *бадтарин* (worst) is derived from the adjective *бад* (bad). In this context, *бадтарини онҳо* (the worst of them) is substantivized, referring to the worst individuals within a previously mentioned group. The character Mullo-Navruz uses the superlative to identify those who are most deserving of being recorded, presumably for punitive or reporting purposes. The substantivized superlative functions as a direct object of the verb *номбар мекунам* (I will name).

Example 13: ...пас аз он *ҷойи* *кашида* ба як шахси тахминан *шасту панҷ-хафтодсола*, *кӯҳансолтарини* дар он ҷо нишастагон буд [1: 214].

The formation *кӯҳансолтарин* (most elderly) is derived from the compound adjective *кӯҳансол* (old-aged / elderly), consisting of *кӯҳан* (old) and *сол* (year). The superlative form is followed by the *izafet* and the locative phrase *дар он ҷо нишастагон* (those sitting there), indicating the group within which the comparison holds. The entire phrase *кӯҳансолтарини дар он ҷо нишастагон* (the most elderly among those sitting there) functions as a predicate, identifying the person in question as the oldest member of the group.

4. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the 13 examples presented above reveals several significant patterns in the usage of the suffix -тарин/-тарин in Sadridin Aini's novel "Ghulomon". These patterns contribute to our understanding of the morphological features and functional potential of the Tajik superlative degree.

4.1. MORPHOLOGICAL PRODUCTIVITY AND LEXICAL DISTRIBUTION

The data demonstrate that the suffix -тарин exhibits considerable productivity in the language of “Ghulomon”. The suffix attaches to various types of adjectival bases, including:

1. Simple qualitative adjectives: зебо (beautiful) → зеботарин; бад (bad) → бадтарин; сиёҳ (black) → сиёҳтарин; обод (prosperous) → ободтарин.

2. Comparative forms: беҳтар (better) → беҳтарин. This pattern, where the superlative is formed on the comparative stem, reflects the historical development of the superlative suffix from the combination of the comparative -тар and an attributive element.

3. Arabic elatives: аъло (excellent) → аълотарин. The addition of the Tajik suffix to Arabic elatives, as noted in Example 2, represents a process of morphological nativization whereby borrowed superlative forms are integrated into the Tajik system. This double marking may serve to reinforce the superlative meaning or to adapt the Arabic form to the morphological expectations of Tajik speakers.

4. Compound adjectives: саркаш (rebellious) → саркаштарин; кӯҳансол (elderly) → кӯҳансолтарин. The attachment of -тарин to compound adjectives demonstrates that the suffix operates at the word level, applying after compounding has taken place.

The frequency distribution of specific forms in the corpus shows that бештарин (most) is by far the most frequent formation, appearing multiple times throughout the novel (Examples 4, 5, 7, 8). This high frequency reflects the functional utility of this form in expressing quantification and partitive relationships. Other formations appear only once or twice in the corpus, suggesting that they are context-dependent rather than lexicalized.

4.2. SUBSTANTIVIZATION AND FUNCTIONAL SHIFT

One of the most striking findings of this study is the extent to which formations with -тарин undergo substantivization, particularly the form бештарин. In Examples 4, 5, 7, and 8, бештарин functions not as an adjective modifying a noun but as a nominal element that governs a following noun or pronoun in a genitive-like relationship. This functional shift from adjective to noun represents a grammaticalization pathway whereby superlative forms develop quantifier functions.

The substantivization of superlative forms is not unique to Tajik; similar phenomena occur in many languages where superlative adjectives can be used as nouns (e. g., English “the best,” “the worst”). However, the frequency and productivity of this pattern in “Ghulomon” suggest that it is a well-established feature of Tajik syntax rather than an occasional innovation.

The partitive construction exemplified by бештарини онҳо (most of them) and бештаринашон (most of them) represents a grammaticalized pattern for expressing the relationship between a quantity and a set. The alternation between the izafet construction (бештарини + noun / pronoun) and the enclitic pronoun (бештарин + -ашон) provides speakers with syntactic flexibility in expressing partitive meanings.

4.3. COMPARISON WITH OTHER HISTORICAL PERIODS

The findings of this study can be productively compared with data from other historical periods of the Tajik literary language. According to Ashrapov, in the language of historical productions from the 18th and 20th centuries, the suffix -тарин appears 35 times (69%) in [8] (the same work analyzed in this study), 14 times (23%) in [2], and twice (4%) in [10]. These figures indicate that the frequency of -тарин usage varies

considerably across texts and periods, with “Ghulomon” showing the highest frequency among the analyzed works.

The relatively high frequency of -тарин in “Ghulomon” may reflect several factors. First, as a literary work of considerable length, the novel provides ample opportunity for the occurrence of superlative forms. Second, Aini’s stylistic preferences may favor the use of superlatives for expressive purposes. Third, the thematic content of the novel, which involves social stratification and moral evaluation, naturally calls for superlative expressions to describe extremes of wealth, poverty, beauty, ugliness, goodness, and evil.

In comparison with earlier periods, Ashrapov notes that the use of the suffix -тарин is historically more limited than that of the suffix -тар. The data from “Ghulomon” confirm that while -тарин is less frequent than -тар overall, it is by no means rare. The 35 occurrences identified in this study demonstrate that the superlative suffix is a productive and functionally important element of Aini’s morphological repertoire.

4.4. STYLISTIC AND PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS

Beyond its basic function of expressing the highest degree of a quality, the suffix -тарин in “Ghulomon” serves various stylistic and pragmatic purposes. In Example 1 (зеботарин иморат – the most beautiful building), the superlative contributes to the vivid description of the setting. In Example 2 (аълотарин поруҳо – the finest manures), the superlative has an almost ironic effect, applying a high-prestige morphological form to a low-prestige referent.

In the socio-political contexts of Examples 7 and 8, the superlative (бештарин) serves a quantifying function that supports the novel’s social analysis. By emphasizing that the majority of peasants were exploited and that the majority of Bolsheviks came from the working class, Aini uses superlative forms to make generalizing statements about social groups.

The quoted speech in Example 9 demonstrates the use of superlatives in religious and proverbial discourse. The parallelism between бештарини касбҳо (the best of professions) and ашрафи халқуллоҳ (the noblest of God’s creatures) illustrates how superlative forms contribute to the rhetorical structure of authoritative statements.

4.5. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have implications for the theoretical understanding of superlative morphology in Tajik. The data support the view that the suffix -тарин is not merely a grammatical marker of degree but a derivational element that can create new lexical items with specialized functions. The substantivization of бештарин into a quantifier represents a clear case of grammaticalization, where a superlative form loses its purely adjectival character and assumes a more grammatical function [4; 7].

The double marking of superlatives on Arabic elatives (аълотарин) raises questions about the interaction between borrowed and native morphological systems. This phenomenon can be understood as a strategy for integrating Arabic vocabulary into Tajik morphosyntax, ensuring that borrowed forms conform to the expectations of Tajik speakers regarding the expression of degree [5; 6].

The variation in syntactic patterns observed in the data suggests that the grammar of superlatives in Tajik is more complex than traditionally described. The partitive constructions, in particular, deserve further study as a distinct syntactic domain with its own rules and constraints.

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, the suffix -тарин in Sadriddin Aini's "Ghulomon" emerges as a productive and functionally diverse morphological element. The suffix not only fulfills its canonical role of expressing the superlative degree but also participates in grammaticalization processes that extend its functional range. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of Tajik adjectival morphology and provide empirical data for future comparative and historical research on the Tajik language.

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