

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ISOMORPHIC AND
ALLOMORPHIC DEVICES OF LINGUISTIC SUBJECTIVITY**

Kodirov Khalilullo Rakhmatullo ugli

PhD Student, Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages

Abstract

Linguistic subjectivity is a fundamental dimension of human communication through which speakers encode perspective, evaluation, epistemic commitment, emotion, knowledge, and interpersonal orientation. Although subjective meanings are found across languages, the linguistic mechanisms through which they are realized vary considerably. The present article investigates the isomorphic and allomorphic devices of linguistic subjectivity from a comparative functional-semantic perspective, with particular attention to English and Uzbek. The study distinguishes isomorphic devices, which exhibit functional and partially structural correspondence across languages, from allomorphic devices, which perform comparable communicative functions through formally different linguistic resources. The analysis considers personal and social deixis, epistemic modality, evidentiality, evaluative language, stance, and discourse-pragmatic markers. The theoretical framework draws on major approaches to subjectivity and intersubjectivity developed by Benveniste, Lyons, Traugott, Nuyts, Narrog, Athanasiadou et al., Aikhenvald, Hunston and Thompson, and other scholars. The analysis demonstrates that linguistic subjectivity cannot be reduced to a fixed inventory of subjective forms. Rather, it results from the interaction of linguistic structure, semantic content, discourse context, speaker perspective, and addressee orientation. English and Uzbek demonstrate substantial functional isomorphism in the expression of subjective meanings but significant allomorphism in their morphosyntactic and pragmatic realization. The study argues that a functional-typological approach is therefore more appropriate than formal equivalence for comparative investigations of linguistic subjectivity.

Keywords: Linguistic subjectivity, intersubjectivity, subjectification, isomorphism, allomorphism, modality, evidentiality, deixis, evaluation, stance, English, Uzbek

Language does not merely represent events, objects, and states of affairs. It simultaneously provides speakers with resources for presenting reality from particular cognitive, emotional, epistemic, and interpersonal perspectives. A speaker may indicate certainty or doubt, approval or disapproval, emotional involvement, source of information, social distance, or the degree of commitment to a proposition. These dimensions of linguistic meaning constitute major manifestations of **linguistic subjectivity**.

The study of subjectivity has a long history in linguistics. Benveniste's theory of enunciation established a fundamental relationship between linguistic form and the speaking subject. In this tradition, subjectivity is not simply a psychological property expressed by language; it is constructed through the linguistic organization of the speech event. The category of person is particularly important because expressions such as I and you obtain their reference through the communicative act itself.

Lyons (1982) subsequently developed an explicitly linguistic account of deixis and subjectivity, while Lyons (1995) situated subjectivity within a broader theory of utterance meaning. Later cognitive-functional approaches expanded the domain to include modality, evaluation, evidentiality, discourse markers, and other linguistic resources.

At the same time, subjectivity must be distinguished from **subjectification** and **intersubjectivity**. Subjectification generally concerns a process of semantic-pragmatic change whereby meanings become increasingly associated with the speaker's perspective, whereas intersubjectification concerns orientation toward the communicative partner. Traugott (2007) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing synchronic "(inter)subjectivity" from diachronic "(inter)subjectification." The distinction is essential because the present article is concerned primarily with synchronic **devices of linguistic subjectivity**, although processes of subjectification provide an important explanation of how some such devices develop historically.

A further theoretical complication arises from the fact that the term subjectivity is used differently in different linguistic traditions. Nuyts (2014) observes that several notions of subjectivity, objectivity, and intersubjectivity circulate in functional and cognitive linguistics and argues that these notions "refer to substantially different phenomena and should therefore not be confused." This observation provides an important methodological principle for the present

study.

The article consequently adopts a functional definition of linguistic subjectivity as the set of linguistic mechanisms through which the speaker's perspective, epistemic position, evaluation, affect, or orientation toward the discourse situation becomes linguistically encoded or pragmatically inferred.

The central purpose of the study is to identify the major **isomorphic and allomorphic devices** of subjectivity and to demonstrate how comparable subjective functions may be realized through similar or structurally divergent linguistic resources in English and Uzbek.

Subjectivity, subjectification, and intersubjectivity

Subjectivity has been approached from several theoretical perspectives. The cognitive-linguistic tradition associates subjectivity with the degree to which a conceptualization incorporates the speaker's perspective. The pragmatic tradition emphasizes the speaker's commitment and orientation toward the proposition. The grammaticalization tradition, meanwhile, has focused on the historical development of subjective meanings.

Athanasiadou, Canakis, and Cornillie (2006) describe subjectification as a widespread phenomenon and note its importance both in diachronic semantic change and in synchronic semantic extension. Their volume brings together approaches concerned with different "paths to subjectivity," reflecting the fact that subjective meanings can emerge through multiple linguistic mechanisms.

Traugott's work is particularly influential in this area. Her approach treats subjectification as a tendency whereby meanings become increasingly grounded in the speaker's perspective. However, the historical process should not be conflated with the synchronic property of being subjective. This distinction is important for the present study because a linguistic expression may synchronically convey subjective meaning without necessarily representing a historically subjectified form.

Nuyts (2014) offers an additional caution. His comparison of competing approaches demonstrates that subjectivity is not a unitary notion and that different scholars may use the term to describe different dimensions of linguistic meaning.

Narrog (2012) provides an especially useful cross-linguistic perspective. Rather than defining modality exclusively in terms of speaker attitudes, he argues for a

distinction between modality and subjectivity. His model treats **speech-act orientation versus event orientation** as a major dimension of modal meaning. This approach is highly relevant to the present investigation because it makes it possible to compare languages without assuming that every modal expression is inherently subjective.

Isomorphism and allomorphy

The terms isomorphism and allomorphy are employed here as comparative analytical concepts.

Isomorphic devices are linguistic forms or constructions that demonstrate substantial correspondence in their semantic-pragmatic function across two languages and may also exhibit partial formal correspondence.

Allomorphic devices perform comparable or related communicative functions but differ substantially in morphological, syntactic, lexical, or discourse realization.

The distinction should not be understood as absolute. A linguistic category may be isomorphic at one level and allomorphic at another. Personal deixis provides a good example: English I and Uzbek men have essentially equivalent deictic functions, whereas the English second-person pronoun you does not reproduce the social distinction encoded by Uzbek sen and siz.

Consequently, comparative analysis should distinguish at least three levels:

1. **functional correspondence;**
2. **semantic-pragmatic correspondence;**
3. **formal or structural correspondence.**

Two forms may therefore be functionally isomorphic while being formally allomorphic.

Personal deixis as an isomorphic device

Personal deixis is among the most transparent manifestations of linguistic subjectivity because it establishes the communicative coordinates of the utterance.

English I and Uzbek men identify the speaker, while English we and Uzbek biz can construct collective or institutional identity. Similarly, English you and Uzbek sen/siz refer to the addressee.

The basic function is therefore isomorphic. Both languages grammaticalize the

fundamental distinction between speaker and addressee.

However, the comparison becomes more complex when interpersonal meaning is considered.

Social deixis as an allomorphic phenomenon

Uzbek provides a grammaticalized distinction between *sen* and *siz*, which can encode differences involving familiarity, respect, politeness, or social distance. Contemporary English does not possess an equivalent singular second-person pronoun opposition.

English therefore frequently realizes similar interpersonal meanings through alternative devices, including:

- titles and address terms;
- lexical expressions;
- politeness formulas;
- modal constructions;
- indirect requests;
- discourse organization.

Thus, English and Uzbek share the **communicative function** of interpersonal positioning but differ in the linguistic location of that meaning.

This is a clear case of allomorphy: the same pragmatic domain is distributed differently within the linguistic systems.

Epistemic Modality and Speaker Commitment

Epistemic modality constitutes one of the most important domains of linguistic subjectivity because it enables speakers to qualify propositions according to certainty, probability, inference, or doubt.

English provides a range of modal auxiliaries and adverbials:

- may;
- might;
- must;
- probably;
- perhaps;
- apparently.

Uzbek expresses comparable meanings through modal words, particles, verbal constructions, and other grammatical resources.

For example:

English:

He may be at home.

Uzbek:

U uyda bo‘lishi mumkin.

The two expressions are functionally comparable in their representation of possibility, although their morphosyntactic organization is different.

Narrog’s (2012) cross-linguistic model is particularly useful here because it does not reduce modality to subjectivity. He argues that subjectivity should be understood through multiple semantic and pragmatic factors and proposes speech-act orientation and event orientation as important dimensions in the analysis of modal expressions.

Narrog’s approach also has a significant comparative implication. His case studies include English *can*, Spanish *capaz*, and Japanese modal markers, demonstrating that apparently similar modal meanings may follow different historical and structural paths across languages.

This supports the distinction proposed in the present article: **modal functions may be isomorphic while their linguistic realization is allomorphic.**

Evidentiality and the Expression of Knowledge

Evidentiality requires particular theoretical caution. It is closely related to subjectivity because speakers may indicate how they obtained information, but evidentiality should not simply be treated as a subtype of subjectivity or epistemic modality.

Aikhenvald (2004) defines evidentiality as a grammatical category concerned primarily with information source. Her cross-linguistic research demonstrates that languages may distinguish firsthand, non-firsthand, inferred, reported, and other sources of information.

Aikhenvald explicitly emphasizes that “evidentiality is a category in its own right, and not a subcategory of epistemic or some other modality.”

This distinction is particularly significant for a study of linguistic subjectivity. The source of information and the speaker’s attitude toward that information are related but conceptually distinct.

For example:

English:

Apparently, he has left.

Uzbek:

U ketgan ekan.

Both expressions can invite an interpretation involving indirect knowledge or inference, but their linguistic structures differ.

English commonly uses lexical adverbs and constructions, whereas Uzbek may use grammaticalized verbal forms and particles.

The resulting relationship can be represented as:

common communicative function → different structural realization

This constitutes allomorphy.

Aikhenvald's cross-linguistic evidence is particularly important because her study draws examples from hundreds of languages and demonstrates that languages vary considerably in how information source is grammatically encoded.

At the same time, functional approaches to evidentiality have expanded beyond strictly grammatical systems. Contemporary scholarship recognizes that lexical expressions, syntactic constructions, and grammatical forms may perform evidential functions even in languages without obligatory evidential paradigms. This distinction is important when comparing English and Uzbek because the comparison should not assume that the absence of a dedicated grammatical evidential paradigm means the absence of evidential meaning.

Evaluation as a Major Device of Subjectivity

Evaluation is perhaps the most direct linguistic manifestation of the speaker's value system.

Hunston and Thompson (2000) define evaluation as "the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about" entities or propositions.

This definition is particularly useful because it places evaluation at the intersection of subjectivity, stance, modality, and discourse.

Evaluative expressions include:

- excellent;
- terrible;
- fortunately;
- unfortunately;
- remarkable;
- disappointing.

Uzbek contains functionally comparable lexical resources:

- ajoyib;
- dahshatli;
- afsuski;
- baxtimizga;
- muhim;
- e'tiborga loyiq.

The lexical forms are not necessarily formally equivalent, but their evaluative functions are comparable.

Hunston and Thompson also emphasize that evaluation constructs relationships between speaker and hearer and contributes to discourse organization. Thus, evaluation should not be regarded merely as a collection of emotionally colored words. It is a discourse-organizing mechanism through which speakers position themselves and their interlocutors.

This perspective also explains why evaluative expressions may be simultaneously subjective and intersubjective: the speaker expresses a personal judgment while implicitly inviting the addressee to recognize or negotiate that judgment.

Stance and Subjective Positioning

The concept of **stance** provides another important bridge between subjectivity and discourse.

Biber and colleagues conceptualize stance in terms of personal feelings, attitudes, value judgments, and assessments, while Hunston and Thompson place stance within the broader category of evaluation. Contemporary research has consequently used overlapping terms such as stance, evaluation, appraisal, modality, and subjectivity.

Consider:

The results are surprisingly significant.

The adjective significant provides an evaluation, while surprisingly additionally encodes the speaker's assessment of the relationship between expectation and actual outcome.

In academic discourse, such expressions are particularly important because authors are expected to maintain an objective rhetorical style while simultaneously positioning themselves toward claims and evidence.

The subjective function can therefore be relatively explicit:

I believe that the results are significant.

or more implicit:

The results are clearly significant.

The second expression contains no overt first-person pronoun, yet it may still communicate strong speaker commitment.

This demonstrates that **subjectivity is not synonymous with first-person reference**.

Isomorphic and Allomorphic Devices: Comparative Overview

The comparison of English and Uzbek demonstrates that subjective meanings are distributed across several linguistic levels.

Linguistic domain	English	Uzbek	Relationship
First-person deixis	I, we	men, biz	Predominantly isomorphic
Second-person deixis	you	sen, siz	Partly allomorphic
Epistemic possibility	may, might, perhaps	mumkin, ehtimol, -sa kerak	Functionally isomorphic, formally allomorphic
Evidentiality	apparently, reportedly, I hear	ekan, emish and related constructions	Predominantly allomorphic
Evaluation	excellent, terrible, fortunately	ajoyib, dahshatli, afsuski	Functionally isomorphic
Politeness	indirectness, titles, modal forms	siz, honorific and lexical strategies	Largely allomorphic
Stance	I believe, clearly, probably	corresponding modal and discourse constructions	Functionally isomorphic
Social positioning	lexical/pragmatic strategies	pronoun choice and pragmatic strategies	Largely allomorphic

The table illustrates that isomorphism and allomorphism operate simultaneously.

Subjectivity and Context

A major consequence of the theoretical literature is that subjectivity cannot be assigned mechanically to individual forms.

The same linguistic form may produce different subjective effects in different contexts.

Compare:

1. I live in Tashkent.
2. I believe the proposal is appropriate.
3. I am delighted with the proposal.

All three contain the first-person pronoun I, but their subjective functions differ considerably. The first primarily establishes personal reference; the second encodes epistemic stance; the third expresses affective evaluation.

Similarly, a modal expression can be interpreted differently depending on its context.

He must be at home.

may express:

- an inference based on available evidence;
- an obligation, depending on context;
- a speaker's strong commitment to a proposition.

This contextual dependency supports Nuyts's (2014) warning against treating different notions of subjectivity as interchangeable.

It also supports Narrog's (2012) argument that modality should not be defined exclusively in terms of subjectivity.

Therefore, a reliable comparative analysis must consider:

form + semantics + discourse context + speaker orientation + addressee orientation.

Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity

The study of linguistic subjectivity has increasingly moved toward the concept of intersubjectivity. A speaker does not merely express an individual perspective; communication is inherently oriented toward another participant.

For example:

- You should probably reconsider the proposal.
- Please consider the proposal again.
- Surely, you can see the problem.

These expressions involve not only the speaker's stance but also an orientation toward the hearer's knowledge, behavior, or interpretation.

Traugott's research on intersubjectification emphasizes this movement toward meanings oriented to the communicative partner. The distinction is particularly useful for social deixis and politeness because these domains directly encode relationships between participants.

Nuyts (2014) stresses that different theoretical traditions use intersubjectivity differently and that these meanings should not be collapsed into a single concept. Narrog (2012), meanwhile, conceptualizes intersubjectivity as part of a broader speech-act orientation that includes speaker-, hearer-, and discourse-oriented meanings.

From the comparative perspective adopted here, English and Uzbek may therefore be considered isomorphic in their communicative need to establish interpersonal relationships but allomorphic in the ways these relationships become grammatically and lexically encoded.

Discussion

The findings support several conclusions concerning the relationship between linguistic subjectivity, isomorphism, and allomorphism.

First, **subjectivity is functionally widespread but formally heterogeneous**. All languages provide speakers with ways of expressing perspective, certainty, evaluation, and interpersonal orientation, but they do not necessarily grammaticalize these meanings in the same way.

Second, **functional isomorphism is more stable than formal isomorphism**. English may and Uzbek mumkin, for instance, can express comparable epistemic possibility, although one is an auxiliary while the other is a lexical/modal element. The relationship is therefore functionally close but morphosyntactically different.

Third, **allomorphism is particularly visible in social deixis and evidentiality**. Uzbek can encode social relations through pronoun choice, while English more frequently relies on lexical and pragmatic strategies. Similarly, English commonly employs lexical expressions to indicate information source, whereas some languages possess dedicated grammatical evidential systems.

Fourth, **evaluation provides a bridge between subjectivity and intersubjectivity**. As Hunston and Thompson demonstrate, evaluation

expresses attitudes and values while simultaneously contributing to relations between discourse participants.

Fifth, **evidentiality should remain analytically distinct from subjectivity**. Aikhenvald's typological work demonstrates that information source is the primary meaning of evidentiality and that evidential systems should not simply be classified as modal or subjective systems. Nevertheless, evidentiality can interact with subjective interpretation because the choice to specify a source may influence the hearer's assessment of speaker commitment.

Sixth, **comparative analysis must be sensitive to linguistic level**. Isomorphism may occur at the semantic level while allomorphy appears at the grammatical level. Consequently, formal comparison alone cannot adequately capture cross-linguistic equivalence.

Conclusion

The comparative investigation of English and Uzbek demonstrates that linguistic subjectivity is realized through a complex network of deictic, modal, evidential, evaluative, and discourse-pragmatic resources.

The concept of **isomorphism** is useful for identifying areas where languages employ comparable linguistic mechanisms for expressing speaker perspective. Personal deixis, epistemic qualification, and evaluation provide particularly clear examples of functional correspondence.

The concept of **allomorphy**, however, is equally important because languages frequently distribute comparable meanings across different grammatical and lexical systems. Social deixis, evidentiality, politeness, and modal constructions demonstrate that semantic-pragmatic equivalence does not entail structural equivalence.

The analysis also confirms that linguistic subjectivity should not be equated with the mere presence of first-person forms or emotionally marked vocabulary. Subjective meaning can be encoded explicitly or implicitly through modality, evidentiality, evaluation, discourse organization, and contextual interpretation. The theoretical distinction between subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and subjectification is likewise essential. Nuyts's distinction among different notions of subjectivity, Narrog's cross-linguistic model of speech-act orientation, Traugott's work on subjectification and intersubjectification, and Aikhenvald's independent treatment of evidentiality all demonstrate that these categories

interact but should not be treated as synonymous.

Accordingly, the most productive approach to comparative linguistic subjectivity is a **functional-typological model** in which linguistic forms are examined according to their semantic, pragmatic, and discourse functions. Such an approach makes it possible to identify both universal tendencies and language-specific realizations, thereby providing a more comprehensive account of how speakers construct perspective through language.

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