ISSN 2181-922X

O‘ZBEKISTON

TIL VA MADANIYAT

UZBEKISTAN

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Folklorshunoslik. Shevashunoslik

2025 Vol. 2

www.navoiy-uni.uz
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ISSN 2181-922X

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O‘zbekiston, Toshkent, Yakkasaroy tumani, Yusuf Xos Hojib ko‘chasi, 103.

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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND MODERN ASPECTS OF EVIDENTIALITY IN UZBEK LANGUAGE

Durdona Ermatova[1]

Abstract

Evidentiality refers to the linguistic encoding of the source and reliability of information. This study investigates the historical development and functional diversity of evidential markers in the Uzbek language, drawing comparisons with other Turkic languages such as Turkish, Kazakh, and Tuvan. By analyzing morphological, syntactic, and lexical structures, the article demonstrates how evidentiality in Uzbek evolved from ancient Turkic roots to its current usage in media, education, and political discourse. Despite not being a fully grammaticalized system, Uzbek employs a variety of evidential strategies to express inferential, reported, and experiential knowledge. This research highlights Uzbek's unique place within the typology of evidential systems and its implications for Turkic linguistics and discourse practices.

Key words: evidentiality, comparative analysis, morphological, syntactic, lexical, typology, Turkic linguistics

Introduction

Evidentiality, a crucial yet often overlooked grammatical category, functions as the linguistic mechanism by which speakers encode the source of their information. It represents not only the epistemological stance of the speaker—how certain they are of what they say—but also how this information was acquired. This grammatical phenomenon varies in expression and prominence across languages; some, like Tuyuca, encode evidentiality obligatorily, while others, like English, lack a formalized system, instead relying on lexical and contextual strategies [Aikhenvald, 2004, 3]. The Uzbek language, part of the Turkic language family, illustrates a unique and layered evidential system that blends both grammaticalized and pragmatic strategies. Evidential markers in Uzbek function as linguistic tools for conveying nuance, distinguishing direct experience from hearsay, or signaling inferential judgments. Hypothetically, these distinctions play a role not only in clarifying discourse but also in structuring social relationships by indicating deference, doubt, or authority. Evidentiality is a linguistic category that expresses the speaker's atti-

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Iqtibos uchun: *Ermatova D.* 2025. *"The historical development and modern aspects of evidentiality in uzbek language".* O'zbekiston. Til va Madaniyat. Folklorshunoslik. Shevashunoslik. 2: 36-47. Doi. 10.52773/tsuull.uzlcfolklore.2025/NJHR4564

tude towards the information being conveyed, specifically indicating the source from which the information was obtained. In other words, evidentiality shows what kind of evidence the speaker possesses to assert the truthfulness of the reported message. This evidence can take various forms, such as direct observation (I saw/heard myself), *indirect information* (I heard from someone else), *inference* (presumably), *deduction* (therefore), or *common knowledge* (it is known that). The category of evidentiality is developed to varying degrees in the world's languages, and Turkic languages, including Uzbek, are rich in possibilities for its expression [De Haan, 2005, 379].

Evidentiality, the linguistic expression of the source of information, was first observed by Franz Boas (1858–1942) in his pioneering work on North American indigenous languages. Boas noted that some languages, such as Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl), required speakers to indicate whether they had seen an event, heard about it, or inferred it, thus introducing the concept of evidential distinctions in linguistic description [Boas, 1911, 438]. Later, Roman Jakobson (1896–1982), a foundational figure in structural linguistics, formally treated evidentiality as a grammatical verbal category. In his influential 1957 paper "Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb," Jakobson included evidentiality among the categories that govern verb morphology and highlighted its role in connecting utterances to context [Jakobson, 1957, 135]. However, it was not until the work of Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald that evidentiality became a fully defined and systematized grammatical category within linguistic typology. In her monograph "Evidentiality," Aikhenvald developed a comprehensive cross-linguistic framework for classifying evidentials and documented their grammatical expression in over 100 languages [Aikhenvald, 2004, 4]. She categorized evidentials based on whether the information was acquired directly, inferred, or reported, and distinguished evidentiality from related notions such as epistemic modality. Together, the contributions of Boas, Jakobson, and Aikhenvald have shaped our modern understanding of evidentiality and its role in both first and second language acquisition.

In the context of Uzbek linguistics, several scholars have also explored the concept of evidentiality, particularly within the framework of Turkic languages. Notably, Prof. G'ulomov M.G., Prof. Mahmudova D., and Dr. Kholdorova N. have discussed evidential forms such as *ekan, emish, and -gan ekan* in Uzbek from both functional-semantic and discourse-pragmatic perspectives [G'ulomov,1999; Mahmudova, 2003; Kholdorova, 2012]. Their works have examined how these forms are used to express indirect evidence, reported speech, and epistemic stance in Uzbek, and how they compare with other Turkic evidential systems like those in Turkish or Kazakh. Additionally, N. Toshpulatova has contributed research on modality and information status in Uzbek, linking evidential markers to broader categories of speaker attitude and knowledge source [Toshpulatova, 2011, 57]. Together, the contributions of Boas, Jakobson, Aikhenvald, and Uzbek linguists such as G'ulomov, Mahmudova, and Kholdorova, have laid a strong foundation for the theoretical and descriptive understanding of evidentiality, both in world languages and specifically

in Uzbek. Their collective work supports the growing interest in how evidential systems are acquired, used, and taught in second language contexts. Uzbek, as a language with a long and complex historical development, has formed diverse ways of expressing evidentiality. These methods are reflected at the phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and lexical levels of the language. In this article, we will examine how evidentiality in Uzbek language has changed through historical stages, explore its forms and functions and analyze its widespread use in modern Uzbek.

Evidentiality, as understood within the framework of linguistic typology, manifests across languages in three primary structural patterns. First, some languages encode evidentiality as a mandatory grammatical category, requiring speakers to explicitly mark the source of their information in every utterance. Such languages include Tuyuca, Quechua, and certain varieties of Eastern Tibetan, where evidential markers are fully integrated into the verbal morphology. Second, there are languages where evidentiality is not obligatory but is still expressed through grammatical or lexical means. Turkish and Uzbek fall into this category; in these languages, evidential distinctions are commonly conveyed through verbal suffixes, copular forms, or syntactic constructions, although speakers are not required to mark evidentiality in every clause. Third, some languages, such as English and French, lack dedicated grammatical evidential markers. Instead, they rely on pragmatic strategies or lexical items—such as adverbs (e.g., "apparently"), verbs of perception *("I saw," "I heard"), or modal verbs ("must," "might")* —to express the speaker's access to information.

In the context of Turkic languages, including Uzbek, evidentiality is expressed through a rich combination of grammatical and lexical tools. Verbal suffixes such as -miş, -gan, and -ibdi mark different nuances of indirectness, such as inference or hearsay. Additionally, copular forms like *ekan and emish* often serve to denote reported or assumed information, while clausal constructions can reinforce or elaborate on these evidential distinctions. The result is a hybrid evidential system that is not fully grammaticalized like in Tuyuca, but nonetheless sophisticated and nuanced. Notably, the strength of evidentiality in Turkic languages lies in their capacity to express indirect evidence—whether through inference, deduction, or second-hand reports—offering speakers multiple strategies for managing the flow and reliability of information within discourse. This typological positioning of Uzbek and related languages reflects a balance between structural flexibility and pragmatic richness in encoding the speaker's epistemic stance.

While evidentiality and epistemic modality are closely related linguistic categories, they serve distinct functions in communication and should not be conflated. Evidentiality primarily marks the source of information—whether the speaker has direct knowledge (e.g., through sight or hearing), has inferred something, or has received it secondhand through hearsay. In contrast, epistemic modality expresses the speaker's degree of certainty or belief about the proposition, regardless of the source. For example, in English, the

sentence "He must be at home" carries strong epistemic modality, showing the speaker's confident inference, while "They say he is at home" reflects evidentiality through hearsay, without indicating how sure the speaker is. In Uzbek, evidentiality is often encoded morphologically: *U kelgan ekan ("It turns out he came")* indicates new or inferred information, while *U kelgan bo'lishi mumkin ("He might have come")* expresses epistemic possibility without specifying the information source. While both categories can overlap—since information source often influences confidence—they are functionally independent. A speaker may report something confidently *(U albatta kelgan, deyishadi – "They say he definitely came")* or hesitantly *(U ehtimol kelgandir, eshitdim – "I heard he might have come").* In linguistic typology, evidentiality is often grammatically obligatory in certain languages (e.g., Tuyuca), whereas epistemic modality tends to be optional and more lexical. The interaction between the two plays a critical role in how languages encode and negotiate knowledge, responsibility, and authority in discourse.

The historical development of evidentiality in Uzbek

The historical development of evidentiality in Uzbek represents a layered and dynamic evolution, beginning with its roots in Old Turkic and progressing through Chagatai, pre-modern, Soviet, and post-independence periods. This trajectory reflects not only linguistic changes but also broader cultural, political, and intellectual shifts that have influenced how speakers conceptualize and report knowledge.

In the Ancient Turkic period, which includes the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions and foundational texts like Mahmud al-Kashgari's "Divan Lughat al-Turk," evidentiality was encoded through both morphological and lexical means. Although a fully grammaticalized evidential system had not yet formed, certain morphemes, particularly the suffix -miş, functioned as indirect evidentials. For example, phrases such as "Türk bodunım **ölmiş**" ("My Turkic people have reportedly perished") exemplify early evidential use that distinguished between direct experience and secondhand information [Johanson, 2000, pp. 61–109]. In addition, verbs *like bil- ("to know"), ko'r- ("to see"), and eshit- ("to hear")* operated as lexical evidentials, helping speakers mark the nature and reliability of their knowledge. In Yusuf Khos Hojib's Kutadgu Bilig, such verbs are used to encode not only factual content but also the speaker's epistemic positioning. Furthermore, nouns such as *guvoh (witness) and dalil (evidence)* reinforced this stance, suggesting a culture of verbal responsibility tied to evidentiary marking [De Haan, 2005, p. 379]. These forms, while not obligatory, formed the conceptual basis for later grammaticalized evidentiality.

During the Chagatai and Classical Uzbek period, the use of evidential forms became more refined and widespread. Chagatai literature, as seen in the works of Alisher Navoi and Babur, integrated suffixes like *-gan* and particles such as *ekan,* which increasingly served inferential, reported, and new-information functions. In poetic and prose texts, these markers were employed not only for

temporal and aspectual expression but also to convey the reliability and origin of information. In Navoi's lyrical poetry, the blending of epistemic sensitivity and rhetorical aesthetics is particularly evident in his use of evidentials in philosophical, romantic, and religious contexts. For instance, phrases such as *keldi, debdurlar ("they said he came") or ko'rganman ("I have seen")* appear frequently to distinguish between experience and narrative tradition, aligning with the Sufi emphasis on experiential versus transmitted knowledge.

Moving into the 19th and early 20th century, the evidential system of Uzbek adapted to changing literary and intellectual styles. As Uzbek prose and poetry diversified beyond courtly literature into social commentary, journalism, and personal memoirs, the evidential markers began to reflect not only inferential and hearsay distinctions but also ideological tones. Writers like Furqat and Avaz Otar used constructions such as *emish ("they say")* and ekan to either align with or distance themselves from reported information. This period also shows increased use of indirect evidentiality in political and historical writings, where authors often expressed skepticism or caution in recounting events. The stylistic usage of evidentials thus served as a rhetorical strategy to manage authorial credibility and mitigate personal risk, especially under colonial scrutiny.

With the onset of the Soviet era (post-1920s), Uzbek underwent substantial reforms in script, lexicon, and grammatical usage. Language planning, influenced by Russian models, led to the standardization of Uzbek and a more systematic codification of evidentiality within prescriptive grammar. While Russian does not feature grammatical evidentiality, its influence led to lexical borrowings and pragmatic shifts in evidential expressions. Nonetheless, native Uzbek evidential forms such *as -gan ekan, emish, and ekan* persisted and adapted to journalistic and bureaucratic styles. In Soviet-era textbooks and public discourse, evidentiality was often subdued, reflecting the ideological imperative of presenting information as objective truth. However, in private narratives and underground literature, writers continued to use evidentials strategically to encode doubt, irony, or unverified claims. Additionally, school grammars of the 1950s and 60s began to describe *-gan ekan* as a specific tense-aspect-evidential category, further systematizing its place in Uzbek pedagogy.

In the post-independence era (since 1991), the use of evidentiality has taken on renewed significance in media, education, and political discourse. With the rise of journalism, social media, and mass communication in Uzbek, evidentials have become crucial tools for signaling the authenticity of reports, distancing oneself from unverified claims, or aligning with collective opinion. Phrases like *ma'lumki ("it is known that"), deyishlaricha ("according to reports"), and aftidan ("apparently")* are now commonly used in news reporting and academic writing. In modern pedagogical materials, evidentiality is taught both as a grammatical and pragmatic phenomenon, highlighting its role in shaping reader expectations and managing speaker accountability. Politicians and public figures also employ evidential constructions like *ko'rinadiki ("it seems that") or tasdiqlandi*

("it has been confirmed") to frame narratives within varying degrees of certainty. Moreover, linguistic studies in this era, including those by Mahmudova, Kholdorova, and Toshpulatova, have emphasized the multifunctional nature of evidentiality in contemporary Uzbek, linking it to sociolinguistic identity, intersubjective relations, and discourse framing.

In conclusion, the diachronic evolution of evidentiality in Uzbek reflects broader patterns of linguistic change influenced by cultural, ideological, and communicative needs. From early suffixal markers in ancient inscriptions to nuanced inferential constructions in contemporary political speech, evidentiality in Uzbek has transformed into a rich and complex system. This evolution not only underscores the adaptability of linguistic structures over time but also highlights the importance of evidentiality in maintaining discursive coherence, epistemic clarity, and social rapport across historical contexts.

In modern Uzbek, the category of evidentiality is fully formed and widely used. Its means of expression are extremely diverse, manifesting primarily at the morphological, syntactic, and lexical levels.

While Uzbek lacks a fully grammaticalized evidential system, it includes several lexical and auxiliary constructions that function evidentially. For example:

Table 1

Uzbek Word/ Form	**Type**	**Example**		**Evidential Meaning**
-di	Direct past	U keldi.	He came.	Speaker saw it.
-gan ekan	Inferential	U kelgan ekan.	He apparently came.	Speaker found out.
ekan	Inference/ new info	Bu u ekan.	So this is him.	Realization at the moment.
deyishadi / emish	Reportative	U kasal emish.	They say he is sick.	Hearsay.

These forms are context-sensitive and carry pragmatic nuances. The choice between *-di* and *-gan ekan*, for example, does not only indicate past tense but also source reliability.

Morphologically, Uzbek uses several suffixes to express evidential meanings. The suffix *-mish* is particularly important, signaling indirect evidentiality or hearsay, as in *U kitobni o'qiganmish ("He has reportedly read the book").* It can also convey inference or unexpectedness, as in *Havoga qarasam, qor yog'ganmish ("When I looked at the sky, it had reportedly snowed"),* and may express irony or doubt, such as *Hamma ishni qilib bo'lganmish-da ("He has reportedly finished all the work, but I doubt it").* The suffix -gan, when combined with auxiliaries like *ekan and emish*, creates forms like *kelgan ekan ("It turns out he came")* and *ketgan emish ("They say he went").* Parti-

cipial forms like *-yotgan, -ar, and -adigan*, used with *ekan,* also carry evidential meaning in present and future contexts. For instance, *u uxlab yotgan ekan ("It turned out he was sleeping")* or *u har kuni shu yerga kelar ekan ("Apparently he comes here every day").*

Syntactically, evidentiality can be expressed through inversion, as in colloquial exclamations like *Kelibdi-ku! ("He's come, unexpectedly!")*, or through complex sentences where the relation between clauses reflects the speaker's interpretation. For example, *U kasal bo'lgani uchun kelmadi ("He didn't come because he was sick")* conveys a deduction. Direct and indirect speech are also powerful syntactic tools for evidentiality; for example, *U: "men kasalman", dedi ("He said, "I am sick")* makes clear the speaker is quoting a direct source.

Lexically, Uzbek employs modal and introductory expressions such as *ehtimol (perhaps), shubhasiz (doubtless), aniqki (it's clear that), aftidan (apparently), ma'lumki (it is known that), and ko'rinadiki (it seems that),* which reflect varying degrees of certainty and source attribution. Verbs like *bilmoq (to know), ko'rmoq (to see), eshitmoq (to hear), taxmin qilmoq (to infer), and gumon qilmoq (to suspect)* directly encode evidential information. Additionally, nouns and adjectives such as *dalil (proof), isbot (evidence), guvoh (witness), aniq (certain), and tasdiqlangan (confirmed)* also contribute to the expression of evidentiality by indicating the reliability or verification of information. Thus, evidentiality in Uzbek is a robust and multi-layered system that integrates morphology, syntax, and lexicon to mark how speakers know what they know.

Cross-Linguistic Comparison: Uzbek and other Turkic Languages

The Uzbek language, as a member of the Karluk branch of Turkic languages, demonstrates a sophisticated evidentiality system that, while not obligatorily grammaticalized, shows remarkable typological parallels with other Turkic varieties such as Turkish, Kazakh, and Tuvan. These languages share common morphological roots in expressing evidentiality, primarily through verbal suffixes and copular particles. For instance, both Turkish and Uzbek employ the suffix *-miş* (Uzbek variant: *-mish*) to signal reported or inferential past, while the particle *imiş* in Turkish finds its functional equivalent in Uzbek's *emish*, both serving to introduce hearsay or second-hand information. Likewise, the inferential construction *-gan ekan* in Uzbek corresponds closely to Kazakh's *-gan eken*, indicating realization based on indirect evidence or late discovery. This structural overlap highlights the shared historical development within the broader Turkic linguistic family, particularly between Oghuz (e.g., Turkish), Kipchak (e.g., Kazakh), and Karluk (e.g., Uzbek) branches.

However, Uzbek also exhibits unique innovations that enhance its evidential system. Notably, the language differentiates between *emish* (typically reserved for clearly hearsay or folklore-like information) and *ekan* (which often implies inferential or evidential realization with a possible modal overtone), thus introducing a subtle semantic gradient between reportativity and inference. This

division allows for more nuanced speaker attitudes toward the reliability and immediacy of information. In contrast, Turkish generally collapses these distinctions into the single suffix *-miş*, and while it can convey both reportative and inferential meanings, contextual reliance is stronger for disambiguation. Kazakh, a Kipchak language, uses *-ipti and -gan eken* to distinguish between surprise inference and known inference, whereas Uzbek blends similar functions into layered constructions such as *-gan ekan and -gan emish*, revealing a syntactic-morphological tendency toward compounding evidentials.

Tuvan, a Siberian Turkic language from the Northeast Turkic branch, displays a more agglutinative structure with markers like *-tir, -ti,* and the particle ***är*** to express degrees of evidence. Compared to Uzbek, Tuvan shows less lexical variation but greater grammatical fixation of evidentiality in verb morphology. Thus, while Tuvan aligns more with the obligatory type of evidential system (albeit not to the extent of languages like Tuyuca), Uzbek retains an optional but lexically rich and pragmatically flexible system. These differences underscore the spectrum of grammaticalization within the Turkic evidential landscape—from the more rigidly encoded systems in Eastern Turkic languages to the more discourse-sensitive and optional systems in Western and Southern branches like Uzbek.

Overall, Uzbek evidentiality stands at a typological crossroads: it shares Turkic roots with languages like Turkish and Kazakh but has evolved a hybrid system that integrates formal suffixes with discourse-pragmatic particles and modal verbs. This cross-linguistic comparison highlights not only the common historical threads that bind Turkic languages but also the distinct grammatical strategies each language adopts to express evidentiality based on sociolinguistic needs, literary traditions, and contact with neighboring languages such as Persian and Russian. Uzbek's ability to layer meanings using particles like *ekan, emish* and auxiliary constructions contributes to a richer expressive palette, particularly in poetic, religious, and oral narrative registers, where nuances of speaker attitude, distance, and credibility are crucial.

Table 2

Language	**Reported Marker**			**Example (Gloss)**
Uzbek	-mish / -gan emish	-gan ekan	ekan, emish	*U kelgan ekan* ("Apparently, he came")
Turkish	-miş	-miş	imiş	*Gelmiş* ("He reportedly came")
Kazakh	-gan eken	-ipti	eken	*Ol kelipti* ("He seems to have come")
Tuvan	-tir	-ti	är	*Baratır* ("He reportedly went")
Kyrgyz	-gan eken	-gan turat / -iptir	eken, turat, emish	*Al kelgen eken* ("It turns out he came")

Uyghur	-ghan emish	-ghan eken	emish, eken	*U kelghan emish* ("They say he came")
Bashkir	-mish	-gan ikän	ikän, emiş	*Ul kilgän ikän* ("Apparently, he came")

Conclusion

The study of evidentiality in Uzbek reveals a deeply rooted and multifaceted linguistic system that has evolved over centuries. From its early attestations in Old Turkic monuments to its sophisticated, context-sensitive application in modern Uzbek, evidentiality serves not only as a grammatical category but also as a mirror of cultural, epistemological, and communicative norms. While Uzbek lacks the fully grammaticalized evidential systems seen in some other languages—where evidential markers are obligatory in every utterance—it nonetheless demonstrates a robust, lexically and morphologically rich evidential framework. This framework reflects both inherited Turkic structures and innovations shaped by contact with Persian, Arabic, Russian, and global linguistic influences in the post-independence era.

Historically, the roots of Uzbek evidentiality can be traced back to early Turkic sources where indirect past markers such as *-miş* and lexical evidentials like *bil-, ko'r-, and eshit-* were used to convey information source. During the Chagatai period, evidential particles like *ekan and emish* began to solidify their role, particularly in poetic and philosophical texts. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, with the emergence of modern prose and political commentary, evidentiality gained a new rhetorical function, allowing authors to modulate authority, distance themselves from contentious claims, or align ideologically. The Soviet period saw both suppression and standardization of evidential expressions, especially under ideological constraints, but evidentiality persisted in literature and everyday speech as a tool of subtle resistance, irony, and narrative shading.

In modern Uzbek, evidentiality continues to flourish across media, education, politics, and interpersonal communication. It serves not only to mark how information is known but also to shape how it is interpreted, believed, or contested. For instance, constructions like *-gan ekan, -mish, ekan, and emish* are employed in both formal and informal registers to indicate whether the speaker witnessed the event, inferred it, or heard about it. These forms play a key role in managing speaker stance, indicating politeness, skepticism, surprise, or indirectness. Moreover, their flexible use across clause types, modal contexts, and narrative structures underscores the dynamic nature of evidentiality in Uzbek discourse.

When compared to other Turkic languages such as Turkish, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, or Tuvan, Uzbek exhibits both shared typological traits and unique developments. While all these languages deploy verbal suffixes and particles to mark evidentiality, Uzbek stands out for its nuanced distinction between particles like *ekan and emish*, which enable speakers to fine-tune meanings across a spectrum from inferred knowledge to folklore-style hearsay. This layered sys-

tem reveals the pragmatic depth of evidential expressions in Uzbek, offering a fertile ground for further comparative and corpus-based research.

In conclusion, evidentiality in Uzbek is not merely a linguistic ornament but a core organizing principle of discourse. It serves as a window into the Uzbek worldview, where knowledge is not just asserted but situated—anchored in experience, filtered through community, and shaded by doubt, belief, or confirmation. Its study not only deepens our understanding of the Uzbek language but also enriches our appreciation of the universal and culture-specific ways in which humans express how they know what they know.

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O'ZBEK TILIDA DASLIKLIKNING TARIXIY RIVOJLANISHI VA ZAMONAVIY ASPEKTLARI

Durdona Ermatova[1]

Abstrakt

Hodisaviylik – bu axborot manbasi va ishonchliligi haqidagi ma'lumotni til orqali ifodalash vositasidir. Ushbu maqolada o'zbek tilida hodisaviylikning tarixiy rivojlanishi va funksional xilma-xilligi o'rganilib, turk tillari – xususan, turk, qozoq va tuva tillari bilan qiyosiy tahlil o'tkaziladi. Morfologik, sintaktik va leksik vositalar asosida hodisaviylikning qadimgi turkiy ildizlardan tortib zamonaviy ommaviy axborot vositalari, ta'lim va siyosiy nutqlardagi ifodasigacha bo'lgan bosqichlari yoritilgan. To'liq grammatik tizimga ega bo'lmaganiga qaramay, o'zbek tili bilvosita, eshitilgan va shaxsiy tajriba asosidagi bilimlarni ifodalashda boy ifoda vositalaridan foydalanadi. Ushbu tadqiqot hodisaviylik tipologiyasida o'zbek tilining o'rni va turkiy tilshunoslikdagi ahamiyatini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: hodisaviylik, qiyosiy tahlil, morfologik, sintaktik, leksik, tipologiya, turkiy tilshunoslik

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Iqtibos uchun: *Ermatova D.* 2025. *"O'zbek tilida dasliklikning tarixiy rivojlanishi va zamonaviy aspektlari".* Uzbekistan. Language and Culture. Folklore. Dialectology. 2: 36-47. Doi. 10.52773/tsuull.uzlcfolklore.2025/NJHR4564

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Jurnal 2017-yil 26-oktabrda O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Matbuot va axborot agentligi tomonidan № 0936 raqam bilan ro‘yxatdan o‘tgan. Tahririyatga kelgan maqolalar mualliflarga qaytarilmaydi.

Jurnal O'zbekiston Respublikasi Oliy Attestatsiya Komissiyasi tomonidan filologiya fanlari bo'yicha falsafa doktori (PhD) va fan doktori (DSc) dissertatsiyalari asosiy ilmiy natijalari chop etilishi lozim bo'lgan ro'yxatga kiritilgan (30.10.2021. No 308/6).

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