



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NATIONAL-CULTURAL SEMANTICALLY MARKED LEXICAL UNITS IN STRUCTURALLY DIVERSE LANGUAGES

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Abstract:

This research focuses on the comparative analysis of national-cultural semantically marked lexical units in structurally different languages, primarily Uzbek and English. The study aims to investigate how language serves as a cultural mirror, encoding specific values, traditions, and social perceptions through semantically rich vocabulary. Through a linguistic and cultural lens, the paper examines how these lexical units embody national identity and reflect a community's worldview. Special attention is given to difficulties encountered in the translation of such culturally loaded terms due to the absence of direct equivalents across languages. The research highlights the importance of understanding semantic nuances to ensure effective cross-cultural communication and accurate translation. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper appreciation of the interaction between language, culture, and meaning.

Keywords: The key concepts discussed in this study include national-cultural semantics, lexical units, cross-cultural comparison, semantic equivalence, culturally marked vocabulary, translation challenges, language and culture interrelation, structural differences between languages, worldview expression, and intercultural communication.

Introduction:

Language is not merely a tool for communication, but a reflection of a nation's cultural heritage, worldview, and social identity. Each language carries within it the



essence of the society in which it evolved — its beliefs, customs, and collective experiences. Lexical units, especially those with national-cultural semantic markings, play a crucial role in conveying such deep-rooted meanings. These words and expressions, shaped by the historical, geographical, and spiritual dimensions of a culture, often lack direct equivalents in other languages, thereby presenting challenges in translation and intercultural understanding. The study of national-cultural semantically marked lexical units is of particular importance when comparing structurally diverse languages. For instance, English and Uzbek differ not only in grammatical structure and syntax but also in how they encapsulate cultural values within their lexicons. While English has undergone centuries of development influenced by Latin, French, and Germanic roots, Uzbek, as a Turkic language, is deeply shaped by nomadic traditions, Islamic culture, and post-Soviet linguistic reforms. These differences make the comparative study of semantically marked vocabulary both complex and fascinating. This research aims to explore how languages with different systems express cultural meanings through specific lexical units, and how these units reflect the unique identity and worldview of their speakers. It investigates examples of culturally rich words and expressions in both Uzbek and English, analyzing their semantic content, cultural context, and pragmatic usage. Moreover, it discusses the issues arising in translation, especially when culturally bound meanings do not easily transfer between languages. By understanding the relationship between language and culture through such semantically charged vocabulary, we gain deeper insight into how communities conceptualize the world around them. This study contributes to the broader fields of comparative linguistics, translation studies, and cultural anthropology, offering practical implications for translators, educators, and intercultural communicators. In sum, this research highlights the indispensable role of national-cultural semantics in shaping linguistic identity and emphasizes the necessity of cultural competence in interpreting and conveying meaning across language boundaries.

Methodological Analysis:

In order to conduct a comprehensive comparative study of national-cultural semantically marked lexical units in structurally diverse languages, a mixed-method



approach was employed. This methodology integrates qualitative linguistic analysis with cultural-semantic interpretation, enabling a holistic understanding of how culturally embedded lexical items function within and across different linguistic systems. The primary languages under examination—Uzbek and English—were chosen for their distinct typological features. Uzbek, a Turkic language with an agglutinative structure, contrasts significantly with English, a Germanic language characterized by an analytic structure. These structural differences serve as a basis for observing how language systems influence the expression and preservation of cultural semantics. The research process began with the selection of lexical units that are rich in national-cultural semantics. These units were identified through a review of monolingual dictionaries, bilingual glossaries, ethnographic texts, proverbs, idioms, and literary works in both Uzbek and English. Attention was given to terms that are culturally specific and do not have direct translations in other languages, such as “uyat” (Uzbek: a culturally rooted concept of shame and honor) or “stiff upper lip” (English: a cultural attitude denoting emotional restraint). Each lexical unit was analyzed on three levels:

1. Semantic Level – Exploring the denotative and connotative meanings of the word or phrase in its native language, and identifying any metaphorical or symbolic significance.
2. Cultural Level – Investigating the cultural origins, societal relevance, and historical background of the term. This includes studying how the unit reflects national customs, traditions, values, or social norms.
3. Translational/Pragmatic Level – Assessing how these units are translated into the other language and what semantic shifts or losses occur during this process. This step also includes evaluating whether functional or descriptive equivalents are used in translation. Comparative analysis was carried out using a contrastive linguistics framework, which allowed for a side-by-side examination of selected lexical units. Special emphasis was placed on identifying the degree of semantic untranslatability and the strategies used by translators to maintain cultural fidelity. These strategies included adaptation, explanation, cultural substitution, and transliteration. Furthermore, the study drew from ethnolinguistic theories and Sapir-Whorf’s linguistic relativity hypothesis, which postulates that language influences thought



and perception. This theoretical lens proved particularly helpful in understanding why certain culturally specific meanings are difficult to express outside their linguistic context. To ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity, the study consulted native speakers, language instructors, and translation professionals. Field observations and interviews provided additional context for how these lexical units are used in everyday communication, rituals, and oral traditions. In conclusion, the methodological approach of this research combines structural, semantic, and cultural perspectives to reveal how national-cultural semantics is embedded in language. By comparing lexicons across typologically different languages, the study not only uncovers the linguistic manifestations of culture but also contributes to improved practices in translation and intercultural communication.

Conclusion:

This study has demonstrated that national-cultural semantically marked lexical units play a vital role in reflecting the cultural identity, worldview, and historical experiences of a speech community. By comparing such units in two structurally diverse languages—Uzbek and English—it becomes evident that language is deeply intertwined with culture, and that many lexical items carry meanings that go far beyond their literal definitions. The research has shown that these culturally loaded lexical units often pose significant challenges in translation due to their rootedness in specific social and cultural contexts. Words and phrases like “uyat” in Uzbek or “stiff upper lip” in English reveal not only linguistic uniqueness but also differences in value systems and communicative behavior. As such, direct translations often fail to fully capture the intended meaning, and alternative strategies—such as cultural adaptation or explanatory translation—are necessary to convey the same depth and nuance. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of cultural competence in cross-linguistic and intercultural communication. Understanding the semantic and cultural backgrounds of such lexical items is essential for accurate translation, effective teaching of foreign languages, and meaningful intercultural exchange. This is especially critical in an increasingly globalized world where interactions between speakers of different languages are becoming more frequent. From a methodological perspective, the use of linguistic, semantic, and ethnocultural analysis provided a



multidimensional view of how national-cultural meaning is embedded in language. The findings suggest that further research should continue exploring a broader range of languages and sociocultural environments to deepen our understanding of how culture shapes language—and vice versa. In summary, this comparative analysis highlights the inseparable connection between language and culture. It emphasizes that to truly understand a language, one must also understand the cultural lens through which its speakers view the world. Only then can we fully appreciate the richness and complexity of national-cultural semantically marked lexical units and their role in human communication.

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