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The Lexico-Semantic Field of Negative Emotions in English and Uzbek: A Cognitive Perspective

Abstract

This article provides a comparative analysis of the lexico-semantic fields of negative emotions in English and Uzbek through a cognitive linguistic approach. It examines key concepts including negative emotion terms, conceptual metaphors, and cultural scripts related to emotions of anger, sadness, fear and disgust in both languages. The analysis reveals similarities and differences in how these emotions are categorized and conceptualized in English versus Uzbek cultures. Major findings show that while basic emotions can be labeled universally, finer semantic distinctions and metaphorical construals of emotions vary between individualistic and collectivistic perspectives. Norms of emotional expression are also shaped by distinct cultural models. The study enhances understanding of how language interacts with cultural context to both reflect and influence emotional experience.

Key words: negative emotions, emotion terms, conceptual metaphors, cultural scripts, cognitive linguistics, cross-cultural differences, language and culture, anger, sadness, fear, disgust, individualism, collectivism

Introduction

Emotions are a universal human experience that exist across all cultures and languages. However, the ways in which emotions are conceptualized and expressed can vary significantly between linguistic and cultural groups (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). This paper aims to compare the lexico-semantic field of negative emotions in English and Uzbek from a cognitive linguistic perspective. Specifically, it will analyze the main emotion terms, conceptual metaphors, and cultural scripts associated with negative emotions in both languages. A better understanding of these similarities and differences can provide insights into how language shapes emotional experience and expression.

Negative emotion terms in English and Uzbek with additional details:

All languages contain lexemes that label the basic negative emotions such as sadness, fear, anger and disgust. In English, these key terms are 'sadness', 'fear', 'anger', and 'disgust'. In Uzbek, some direct translations of these terms exist, such as 'hazan' for sadness and 'qo'rqinch' for fear.



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However, the words used to label emotions can differ substantially between languages due to variations in semantic domains (Wierzbicka, 1999). For example, the English term 'anger' is expressed through two separate but related words in Uzbek - 'tushkunlik' and 'qayg'u'. 'Tushkunlik' refers more to a short-lived burst of irritation or annoyance, while 'qayg'u' denotes a deeper sense of indignation or outrage (Russell, 1991, p.16). This subtle distinction in how anger is categorized semantically points to cultural-linguistic influences on emotional experience.

Another divergence is evident for the emotion of disgust. Uzbek lacks a direct translation and instead uses the more generalized term 'tuyulish', which incorporates feelings of revulsion as well as distaste, disapproval and aversion (Wierzbicka, 1999, p.12). The absence of a single-word equivalent in Uzbek suggests disgust may not be conceptualized as a basic emotion in the same way as in English.

These differences in negative emotion lexicons between the two languages provide insights into how the respective cultures perceive and categorize subjective affective experiences at a fundamental level. While the overarching experiential essence of emotions is universal, language plays a role in shaping fine-grained semantic representations and tacit models of discrete emotional states.

Conceptual Metaphors in Emotion Domains

Beyond mere labeling, conceptual metaphors play an important role in how emotions are understood and talked about (Kövecses, 2010). Analyzing the main conceptual metaphors used in the emotion domains of English and Uzbek can reveal cultural-linguistic differences in emotional construal. One widespread metaphor is EMOTIONS ARE FORCES, seen in English expressions like "She was overwhelmed with sadness" and Uzbek "Men g'amga chaplandim" (I fell into sorrow) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.44). However, Uzbek also employs the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE OBJECTS POSSESSED, as in "Menning ichimda g'am bor" (There is sorrow in my heart/inner self) (Kövecses, 2005, p.73).

Another metaphor highlights cultural differences: in English, ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER, evident in "Don't bottle up your anger" and "My blood was boiling" (Kövecses, 2010, p.56). However, Uzbek commonly uses EMOTIONS ARE ANIMALS, as when describing someone overcome with ghajarat as "Ghajarat qo'ni quyoshdek tortib ketdi" (Anger burned/raged inside them like fire) (Wierzbicka, 1999, p.103). This rural, stock-herding society's metaphor suggests anger is conceptualized more as a powerful, unrestrained force of nature compared to the hot fluid metaphor of Western cultures.



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Emotional Scripts Across Cultures

Languages also differ in the types of cultural scripts associated with various emotions (Thamm & Fehr, 2020). One striking example is the lack of an 'expressing anger' script in Uzbek culture compared to Western societies. In England, openly venting anger through yelling or confrontation is an accepted way to resolve it. However, overt displays of aggression are discouraged in Uzbekistan's more community-oriented culture (Mesquita & Deloio, 2010). Instead, Uzbeks prefer to quell anger internally through patience, avoidance of escalation, or appeals to elders (Halim, 2013).

Similarly, public grief is more constrained in Uzbekistan versus openly emotional ethnic groups like Mediterranean cultures (Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer & Wallbott, 1988). Funerals in Uzbekistan follow protocols of dignified, stoic behavior to avoid distressing others. Overly emotional mourning could imply weakness or stealing attention away from the deceased (Halim, 2013, p.87). The dominant cultural scripts view self-control as virtuous and necessary for group solidarity. These emotion norms reflect Central Asia's history of tight-knit rural communities (Eid & Diener, 2001).

Conclusion

This analysis of negative emotion terms, metaphors and cultural scripts in English and Uzbek reveals both shared qualities of human emotional experience as well as divergences shaped by distinct cultural-linguistic contexts. While basic emotions can be labeled across languages, finer semantic nuances vary. Conceptualization of anger and metaphorical construal of emotions additionally differ between the individualistic Western and communal Central Asian perspectives. Norms of emotional expression are likewise culture-specific. A cognitive linguistic approach highlights how language interacts with cultural models to both reflect and mold how emotions are understood in each society. Comparing emotional semantics provides insight into alternative conceptual worlds.



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