

Semantic Components of Nationally Specific Words

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Abstract: This article examines the semantic structure of nationally specific words in the Uzbek language and the cultural components embedded within them. The study highlights the role of the people's lifestyle, traditions, and values in the formation of lexical meanings. Particular attention is paid to the significance of the semantic scope of national-cultural lexical units in speech communication and language use. The article further explores the contribution of denotative, significative, and paradigmatic components to the interpretation and functioning of nationally marked vocabulary within the linguistic system.

Keywords: Semanticization, denotative component, significative component, paradigmatic component, word meaning, realia, lexical meaning, Uzbek language, nationally specific words.

Introduction: Nationally specific words in the Uzbek lexicon do not merely denote objects, they also embody the centuries-old experience, worldview, and ethnic values of the Uzbek people. In the process of developing students' speech competence, analyzing the semantic components of such words and uncovering the hidden cultural layers embedded within them serves not only as an essential aspect of language instruction but also as a crucial factor in fostering intercultural communicative competence. Traditional teaching methodologies tend to focus primarily on the lexical meanings of nationally specific words. However, failure to understand the socio-cultural and ethical connotations underlying such lexical units, as well as their significative and pragmatic associations, may result in impoverished language use and reduced communicative effectiveness.

METHOD

Nationally specific words should be regarded not merely as elements of vocabulary but as systematic linguistic units that contribute to the formation of the unique "linguistic worldview" of the Uzbek people. Therefore, they require examination together with their internal semantic layers and cultural implications.

The process of revealing meaning, namely semanticization, largely depends on the type of semantic structure represented by a particular lexical unit. In his semantic classification of French vocabulary, M. Burlakov [1] proposes dividing lexical units into five categories:

- a) words denoting culture-specific realia of a foreign language;
- b) words whose meanings fully correspond to the semantic structure of equivalent words in the native language;
- c) monosemous words or words whose meanings correspond to one of the meanings of a polysemous word in the native language;
- d) words whose individual lexical meanings are not equivalent to those of words in the native language but are related to them at the level of componential analysis;
- e) words that are connected with native-language words solely through semantic relations.

Semantics encompasses various dimensions and is concerned with the study of meaning. In the present research, national-cultural lexical units are examined

both as elements of the language system and as units functioning in speech.

According to N. I. Kondakov, “Semantics is the content that an object acquires for people in the course of their everyday, aesthetic, scientific, productive, socio-political, and other forms of activity” [7]. The semantics of national-cultural lexical units includes those features that make it possible to identify a designated object and distinguish it from other semantically similar words used in everyday communication. The semantic content of a word ensures mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener.

The semantic structure of nationally specific lexical units consists of the following components:

- a) the denotative component;
- b) the significative (conceptual) component;
- c) the paradigmatic component.

Denotative Component

The denotative component (nominative seme) is the naming element of a lexical unit that reflects such characteristics of reality as actions, states, objects, quantities, and attributes. It serves as a link between reality, concepts, and sememes [4]. Denotative components primarily include numerous lexical units that correspond to one another in meaning but differ in content. Examples of Uzbek national-cultural words include *do'ppi* (skullcap) – шапка, *belbog'* (waist sash) – пояс, and *choy* (tea) – чай.

The world of objects encompasses extralinguistic entities perceived in reality and represented through the semantic structure of language, including not only tangible objects but also emotions, relationships, psychological states, and other aspects of human experience.

Significative Component

The significative component refers to a layer of meaning associated not with objective reality itself, but with the way reality is reflected in human consciousness. Undoubtedly, language serves as a means through which individuals convey information about objects and phenomena in the surrounding world. However, the essence of a lexical unit (a word) does not lie merely in its designation of an object or its direct association with it. Rather, its significance resides in its ability to express a particular concept that

emerges as a result of human cognitive activity.

Words embody the generalized outcomes of human thought. In other words, the common features abstracted from real objects or phenomena are transformed into conceptual entities. The aggregate of these essential and generalized features, that is, the conceptual essence of the objects represented by a word, is referred to as its significate [5].

The significate of national-cultural words constitutes the core part of their lexical meaning. For example:

Andijon do'ppi is a traditional Uzbek headdress distinguished by decorative patterns characteristic of the Andijan region, particularly almond-shaped ornaments.

Sumalak is a traditional national dish prepared from sprouted wheat grains. As a symbolic food associated with the celebration of Navruz, it is traditionally prepared during the spring season.

First and foremost, learners should be introduced to the significate of a new word. Equally important is explaining how the word is used in speech and in which communicative situations it is appropriate. Memorizing denotative meanings alone is insufficient. Even if a learner memorizes the denotations of approximately thirty nationally specific lexical units, without understanding the rules governing their usage, they will be unable to employ these words correctly in real communicative situations and may even struggle to construct simple sentences.

Consider, for example, the Uzbek expression “*oq oltin*” (“white gold”) in the sentence: *Oq oltin o'zbek xalqining boyligi hisoblanadi*. If a learner knows only the denotative meanings of the individual words, they may translate the expression literally as white gold. Such a translation may be linguistically accurate at the lexical level, yet semantically inappropriate because the learner fails to recognize the significative and metaphorical meaning of the expression. If the learner is familiar with its contextual lexical meaning—namely, that *oq oltin* refers to cotton—the sentence will be correctly understood and translated as: Cotton is considered one of the wealths of the Uzbek people.

The study of Uzbek national-cultural lexical units through systematic semantic relationships significantly enhances vocabulary retention among Russian-speaking learners. When national-cultural words are

learned within networks of semantically related lexical items, the acquisition and retention of new vocabulary are reinforced through associative connections.

According to Yu. N. Karaulov, “Every word is connected to the meanings of other words through thousands of relationships. These include synonymic, antonymic, word-formational, and polysemantic connections” [6]. Such relationships are referred to as paradigmatic relations.

For instance, an analysis of the Uzbek word *non* (“bread”) in explanatory dictionaries reveals the following meanings:

1. A food product made from dough and baked in a tandoor, oven, frying pan, or similar cooking device;
2. Food, drink, livelihood, or anything necessary for sustaining life in a broader sense.

However, when combined with other words, the lexical meaning of *non* extends beyond its primary denotation:

- *Non topmoq* – to earn a living;
- *Nonini yemoq* – to work in someone’s service; to benefit from someone;
- *Non-tuzini o’tamoq* – to appreciate and repay someone’s kindness;
- *Nonini qotirmoq* – to deprive someone of their livelihood;
- *Nonli bo’lmoq* – to obtain a good job or stable source of income.

Paradigmatic Component

The paradigmatic component represents one of the dimensions of relationships among words containing national-cultural elements, reflecting a word’s position and functioning within the language system. At this level, national-cultural lexical units acquire their linguistic status. From this perspective, one of the linguistic methods for determining the semantic structure of national-cultural units is the description of their paradigmatic relationships.

One of the most widely recognized descriptions of paradigmatic groups was provided by D. N. Shmelev, who noted that: “Paradigmatic relations in the lexicon are not only multilevel but also multidirectional. Many words simultaneously belong to different lexical-semantic paradigms. Every significant lexical seme is

identified through its semantic opposition to one or more other words” [9].

As is well known, paradigmatic relations among national-cultural lexical units are based on similarities between them. In other words, these lexical units share certain common structural or semantic components. According to Kuznetsova, the term word structure refers to both the composition of its constituent components and their organizational arrangement [8].

The identification of the paradigmatic component in the lexical description of Uzbek national-cultural lexical units is also of considerable pedagogical importance. At this level, systematic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, and lexical-semantic groupings are analyzed. The most common forms of paradigmatic relations are synonymy and antonymy. For example:

- *osh* – *palov* (*pilaf*);
- *to’y* – *nikoh bazmi* (wedding celebration).

The use of polysemous national-cultural lexical units in various classroom activities contributes to the development of oral communication skills, as the context determines the specific meaning intended in each case. Such lexical units generally arise from regular and systematic relationships with other words and are therefore determined by their lexical environment.

For example, the Uzbek word *bosh* (“head”) possesses meanings beyond its primary denotation as a part of the human body:

1. A leader or person in charge;
2. The upper or top part of an object.

This indicates that teachers should pay particular attention to explaining polysemous words. It is advisable to reveal each meaning through contextual examples, since insufficient knowledge of secondary meanings often leads to misunderstanding of individual sentences or entire texts.

A lack of understanding of the lexical background of national-cultural units is among the most common causes of misunderstanding among Russian-speaking students learning Uzbek. In many cases, learners rely solely on the direct translation of a word without taking its cultural and lexical background into account. The concept of lexical background refers to the body of knowledge, perceptions, and associations formed in an

individual's consciousness through interaction with the surrounding world in the course of everyday activities [3].

Consider the following Uzbek sentence:

Choy ichib olamizmi?

Most learners translate this sentence literally as:

“Shall we drink tea?”

because they consider only the primary meaning of the word choy (“tea”). However, in Uzbek communicative practice, the expression choy ichib olamizmi? may imply “Shall we have something to eat?” or “Shall we have a meal or snack?” rather than merely drinking tea. This example demonstrates that relying exclusively on dictionary translation without considering lexical background may result in an inaccurate interpretation of meaning. Therefore, when studying national-cultural words in Uzbek, their cultural, contextual, and lexical backgrounds should be examined thoroughly.

In order to semanticize the lexical background of a national-cultural word, researchers introduced a special method known as word explanation, establishing the following fundamental requirements for effective explanation:

1. Informational adequacy;
2. Absence of unnecessary information;
3. Reliability.

The first requirement implies that the volume of information provided in an explanation should be sufficient to form an adequate understanding of the word's lexical background. According to the second requirement, irrelevant and incidental information should be systematically excluded. The third requirement stipulates that all information included in the explanation must be reliable and, whenever possible, based on the most up-to-date sources. From a linguistic perspective, explanations should reflect the principal paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships of the lexical unit as comprehensively as possible.

The methodological difficulties associated with explaining and understanding words containing national-cultural components may primarily be viewed as problems related to the semanticization of their lexical background. The lexical backgrounds of equivalent words in different languages contain both interlingual semantic elements and national-cultural

semantic features. When a foreign-language learner assumes that a word in the target language is identical to its counterpart in the native language, they are likely to perceive the lexical backgrounds of the two words as nearly identical as well. This results in linguocultural interference, whereby information and associations characteristic of one culture are transferred to another. Linguocultural interference arises from interaction between cultures and often manifests itself as semantic inconsistency or communicative inappropriateness in speech [2].

To prevent linguocultural interference, teachers of the Uzbek language should take Russian language and culture into account by comparing and describing the lexical backgrounds of equivalent words in both languages. Instruction should likewise be organized with consideration for the linguistic and cultural characteristics of Russian-speaking learners.

The following methodological principles may help overcome difficulties encountered in the semanticization of lexical units containing national-cultural components:

- Focusing simultaneously on several key lexical units based on communicative needs;
- Gradually expanding and deepening the meanings of lexical units through contextualized texts;
- Implementing a step-by-step approach to the semanticization of national-cultural lexical units, whereby learners repeatedly encounter these words and progressively accumulate elements of their semantic background;
- Dividing informational content into smaller units and explaining them systematically during instruction;
- Presenting the semantic background of nationally marked words through texts, dialogues, explanatory notes, exercises, and visual materials in segmented form, while ensuring that these segments collectively form a coherent and logically interconnected system.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the semanticization of nationally specific lexical units, limiting interpretation solely to the denotative meaning does not fully reveal the true essence of a word. For a comprehensive understanding, it is essential to take into account its significative and paradigmatic relations and to ensure that these aspects

are not overlooked in the teaching process. Doing so can lead to significant improvements in students' speech development and overall communicative competence.

The use of national-cultural materials in developing learners' speech not only increases their interest in language learning but also serves as a strong stimulus for forming communicative competence. In particular, clearly distinguishing the semantic layers of nationally specific words enhances learners' ability to select appropriate vocabulary and use it correctly in context.

The following recommendations are proposed to improve the effectiveness of Uzbek language education:

- Introduce "Cultural Explanatory Dictionaries" in Uzbek language textbooks designed for general secondary schools, which, in addition to definitions of nationally specific words, also reflect their linguocultural features;
- Replace traditional translation-based teaching methods with approaches based on componential analysis when teaching nationally specific vocabulary;
- Organize specialized seminars, training workshops, and professional development courses for Uzbek language teachers focusing on principles of linguocultural analysis.

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