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Linguocognitive Characteristics of The Concepts of “Happiness” and “Baxt” in English and Uzbek National Cultures

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Abstract: This article examines the linguocognitive features of the concepts “happiness” and “baxt” in English and Uzbek national cultures through a comparative analysis of proverbs and phraseological units. These linguistic forms reflect cultural knowledge and collective experience. Using qualitative, semantic, cognitive, and comparative methods, the study identifies both universal and culture-specific characteristics. The findings show that although both concepts share a common emotional core, their interpretations differ due to cultural and social factors. In English, “happiness” is associated with individual satisfaction and internal states, whereas in Uzbek culture, “baxt” is linked to family, social harmony, and moral values. The study highlights the relationship between language, cognition, and culture.

Keywords: Happiness, Baxt, Cognitive Linguistics, Cultural Linguistics, Proverb, Comparative Analysis

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization and increasing intercultural integration, the study of the relationship between language and culture has become one of the central concerns of modern linguistics. Language functions not only as a tool of communication but also as a reflection of human cognition, cultural values, historical experience, and national identity. Through conceptual systems embedded in language, it becomes possible to understand how different cultures perceive, categorize, and interpret reality[1].

Among these conceptual systems, emotional and axiological notions – particularly the concept of happiness – occupy a significant position. Although happiness is generally regarded as a universal human experience, its interpretation varies considerably across cultures[2]. In English-speaking contexts, the concept of “happiness” is often associated with personal freedom, individual achievement, and inner psychological satisfaction. For instance, expressions such as “*pursuit of happiness*” or “*on cloud nine*” emphasize individual emotional states. In contrast, in Uzbek culture, the concept of “baxt” is closely connected with family well-being, social harmony, gratitude, and spiritual balance, as reflected in expressions like “*Baxt oilada*” (Happiness is in the family) and “*Boriga shukur qil*” (Be grateful for what you have). The present study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the linguocognitive features of the concepts “happiness” and “baxt” in English and Uzbek, with particular attention to their representation in proverbs and phraseological units[3].

The concept of “happiness” has been extensively examined within the frameworks of cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, and psychology. One of the most influential theoretical approaches is the “Conceptual Metaphor Theory” developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson[4]. According to this theory, abstract concepts are structured through metaphorical mappings grounded in physical experience. For example, the conceptual metaphor *HAPPINESS IS UP* is reflected in expressions such as “*I’m feeling up*” or “*in high spirits*.” Similarly, *HAPPINESS IS LIGHT* appears in phrases like “*Her face lit up*,” while *HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER* is evident in expressions such as “*He is filled with joy*.” These metaphors demonstrate how abstract emotional states are conceptualized through embodied experience[5].

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design and a combination of descriptive, semantic, cognitive, and comparative methods to analyze the linguistic representation of the concepts “happiness” and “baxt” in English and Uzbek languages. The research material consisted of 100 linguistic units, including 50 English and 50 Uzbek proverbs and phraseological expressions related to the target concepts. The data were selected using purposive sampling based on relevance to the concepts, cultural significance, and semantic clarity.

The research procedure was carried out in several stages:

Data Collection: Proverbs and phraseological units related to “happiness” and “baxt” were collected from dictionaries, folklore sources, academic literature, and electronic corpora in both languages.

Data Selection and Classification: The collected material was filtered according to predefined criteria. Repetitive and irrelevant units were excluded, resulting in a balanced corpus of 50 English and 50 Uzbek items.

Semantic Analysis: Each linguistic unit was analyzed to identify its literal meaning, contextual interpretation, and evaluative connotations.

Cognitive Analysis: Conceptual structures, associations, stereotypes, and cultural representations of “happiness” and “baxt” were examined to reveal their underlying mental models.

Comparative Analysis: English and Uzbek data were compared to identify similarities and differences in conceptualization, linguistic representation, and cultural interpretation.

3. Results

The analysis of 100 linguistic units (50 English and 50 Uzbek proverbs and phraseological expressions) revealed both shared and culture-specific ways of conceptualizing “happiness” and “baxt.” One of the most visible findings is that in both languages, happiness is strongly associated with emotional well-being, but the way this emotion is linguistically framed differs significantly. In English data, happiness is predominantly represented as an internal psychological state. For example, expressions such as “*on cloud nine*,” “*walk on air*,” and “*in high spirits*” conceptualize happiness as an elevated or light emotional condition[6]. These metaphors show that happiness is experienced individually and internally, often detached from social context. Similarly, the proverb “*Happiness is a state of mind*” directly defines happiness as a mental construct rather than an external condition. In contrast, Uzbek data demonstrate a stronger connection between happiness and social and family relationships. For instance, expressions such as “*Baxt oilada*” (Happiness is in the family) and “*Oila ahil bo’lsa, baxt bo’ladi*” (If the family is united, happiness exists) highlight the collective nature of happiness. Here, happiness is not only an internal feeling but a result of harmony within social structures, especially the family[7].

Another important result is the difference in the role of material wealth and fortune. In English, expressions like *"Money can't buy happiness"* and *"Fortune favors the bold"* show a dual attitude: while happiness is not linked to money, success and risk-taking are still valued. In Uzbek, similar meanings are expressed more morally, for example *"Baxt pulda emas"* (Happiness is not in money) and *"Boylik baxt keltirmaydi"* (Wealth does not bring happiness), which emphasize ethical and moral judgment more strongly[8].

The analysis also revealed differences in lexical dominance. In English, the most frequent lexical units were *"happiness," "life," "heart,"* and *"luck,"* as in *"Follow your heart"* and *"Happiness comes from within."* In Uzbek, dominant lexical items included *"baxt," "ko'ngil" (heart/mind), "oila" (family),* and *"qanoat" (contentment),* as seen in *"Ko'ngil tinchligi – baxt"* (Peace of mind is happiness) and *"Qanoat baxt keltiradi"* (Contentment brings happiness)[9].

4. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the concepts of *"happiness"* and *"baxt"* share a universal emotional core but differ significantly in their cultural and cognitive realization. Both languages recognize happiness as a positive emotional state; however, its conceptual structure varies according to cultural values[10]. In English, happiness is mainly constructed as an individual and internal experience. This is evident in expressions such as *"Happiness is a choice"* and *"In high spirits,"* which emphasize personal responsibility and psychological independence. These examples reflect a cultural model in which the individual is the central agent of emotional well-being.[11] This supports Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory, where abstract emotions are structured through embodied experience, such as *HAPPINESS IS UP*, seen in *"on cloud nine."* In Uzbek, however, happiness is deeply embedded in social and moral structures[12]. Expressions such as *"Ota-ona duosi baxt keltiradi"* (Parents' blessing brings happiness) and *"Oila tinchligi – baxt"* (Family peace is happiness) show that happiness is not viewed as an isolated emotional state but as a result of social harmony and moral behavior. This aligns with Wierzbicka's Cultural Scripts Theory, which explains that emotions are shaped by culturally specific norms and values[13].

Another important observation is the role of values. English expressions like *"Follow your bliss"* reflect self-fulfillment and personal freedom, whereas Uzbek expressions such as *"Shukr qilgan baxt topadi"* (One who is grateful finds happiness) and *"Qanoat – tuganmas xazina"* (Contentment is an endless treasure) emphasize gratitude, patience, and moral discipline.[14] This indicates a stronger axiological dimension in Uzbek conceptualization. The results show that while *"happiness"* and *"baxt"* share a universal emotional foundation, their linguistic and cognitive representations are shaped by distinct cultural models: an individualistic model in English and a collectivist-moral model in Uzbek[15].

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the concepts of *"happiness"* and *"baxt,"* while universal in essence, are shaped by distinct cultural and cognitive frameworks. English representations emphasize individuality, personal achievement, and internal emotional states, whereas Uzbek interpretations foreground social relationships, family cohesion, and moral values. The study contributes to the fields of cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics by identifying the conceptual structures underlying these notions and revealing cross-cultural differences in their representation. Moreover, the findings highlight the crucial role of language in shaping human thought and cultural perception. The results also have practical implications for translation studies, intercultural communication, and language teaching, as understanding conceptual differences can enhance cross-cultural understanding and effective communication.

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