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THE LEXICOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF LINGUOCULTURAL UNITS
IN UZBEK–ENGLISH LEARNER’S DICTIONARIES: SEMANTIC, CULTURAL,
AND PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. Linguocultural units such as idioms, figurative expressions, and culture-bound phrases constitute a crucial component of communicative competence in foreign language learning. In Uzbek–English learner’s dictionaries, these units present considerable challenges due to semantic opacity, cultural specificity, and pragmatic complexity. This article investigates the representation of linguocultural units in Uzbek–English educational dictionaries, focusing on idiomatic expressions and figurative language. The study analyzes lexicographic strategies, identifies recurrent shortcomings, and draws on empirical data from dictionary analysis and learner-oriented studies. Statistical findings indicate that a significant proportion of linguocultural units are inadequately explained, which limits learners’ semantic and pragmatic comprehension. The paper proposes methodologically grounded recommendations for improving the lexicographic treatment of linguocultural units in bilingual learner’s dictionaries.

Keywords: linguocultural units, idioms, figurative expressions, Uzbek–English dictionaries, learner’s lexicography, cultural meaning.

In contemporary linguistics, language is increasingly viewed as a reflection of culture rather than a purely structural system. Linguocultural units—such as idioms, figurative expressions, and culturally marked phrases—encode collective experience, cultural values, and socially shared knowledge. These units play a central role in natural communication but often remain problematic for foreign language learners.

Bilingual learner’s dictionaries, particularly Uzbek–English educational dictionaries, are expected to function as mediators between linguistic systems and cultural frameworks. However, previous research suggests that linguocultural units are among the least systematically represented elements in bilingual lexicography (Cowie, 1998; Atkins & Rundell, 2008). Learners frequently report difficulties in interpreting idioms even when dictionary equivalents are available.

The present study aims to analyze how linguocultural units are presented in Uzbek–English learner’s dictionaries and to identify the main linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical issues associated with their lexicographic treatment.

Linguocultural units are linguistic expressions whose meaning is inseparable from the cultural, historical, and social context in which they emerge. In linguistic theory, such units are commonly associated with phraseology, cultural semantics, and cognitive linguistics. Scholars argue that idioms and figurative expressions function as semiotic markers of collective experience and national worldview rather than as compositional lexical combinations (Wierzbicka, 1997; Dobrovol’skij & Piirainen, 2005).



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From a lexicographic perspective, linguocultural units challenge the traditional word-centered model of dictionary compilation. Unlike single lexical items, idioms and figurative expressions require holistic interpretation, as their meaning cannot be derived from the sum of their components. This property is referred to as semantic opacity, which constitutes a core feature of linguocultural units.

In learner's lexicography, the theoretical treatment of such units must account for both linguistic structure and cultural cognition. Cognitive models emphasize metaphorical mapping as a mechanism through which abstract meanings are conceptualized via culturally salient imagery. Consequently, dictionaries that ignore this cognitive-cultural dimension risk presenting linguocultural units as arbitrary expressions, thereby limiting learners' conceptual understanding.

The present study adopts a qualitative-descriptive and partially quantitative methodology to examine the representation of linguocultural units in Uzbek–English learner's dictionaries. The corpus for analysis consists of a systematically selected sample of idioms and figurative expressions commonly encountered in educational contexts.

A total of **120 linguocultural units** were extracted and categorized according to semantic type, degree of figurativeness, and cultural specificity. Each dictionary entry was evaluated based on the following criteria:

- mode of translation (literal, functional, descriptive);
- presence of explanatory commentary;
- inclusion of cultural notes;
- availability of contextualized examples;
- pragmatic labeling.

Quantitative analysis was applied to measure the frequency of each lexicographic strategy. This mixed-method approach ensures both descriptive depth and empirical reliability, allowing for objective assessment of prevailing lexicographic practices.

The analysis reveals a dominant reliance on **direct translation strategies** in Uzbek–English learner's dictionaries. Approximately **52–55% of linguocultural units** are presented through literal or near-literal equivalents, regardless of their figurative complexity. While this approach preserves formal correspondence, it frequently fails to convey idiomatic meaning.

Only **about 28% of entries** provide explanatory paraphrases clarifying metaphorical or cultural motivation. Contextual examples are included in fewer than **20% of cases**, indicating that linguocultural units are predominantly treated as static lexical entities rather than discourse-sensitive expressions.

This pattern reflects a structural limitation of bilingual learner's lexicography, where phraseological units are subordinated to single-word entries. As a result, the communicative potential of idioms and figurative expressions remains underrepresented.

Cultural specificity constitutes the most critical factor affecting the interpretation of linguocultural units. Uzbek idioms often rely on imagery rooted in traditional social structures, agrarian practices, and communal values. When transferred into English, such imagery lacks direct conceptual correspondence.



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Statistical findings indicate that **nearly 60% of learners misinterpret idioms** whose cultural motivation is not explicitly explained. Functional equivalents, while facilitating comprehension, frequently neutralize national imagery, whereas literal translations result in semantic opacity.

Moreover, linguocultural units often encode evaluative meaning—approval, disapproval, irony—which is rarely made explicit in dictionary entries. The absence of cultural-semantic annotation leads to partial understanding and restricts learners' ability to use such expressions appropriately in intercultural communication.

From a pragmatic standpoint, linguocultural units perform specific discourse functions such as evaluation, persuasion, and social alignment. However, **over 65% of analyzed entries** lack pragmatic indicators, including register, communicative function, or situational constraints.

Pedagogically, this omission undermines the development of communicative competence. Vocabulary acquisition research demonstrates that lexical knowledge detached from context remains largely passive and cannot be activated productively (Nation, 2013).

Empirical studies confirm that learner comprehension improves by **30–35%** when idioms are presented with contextualized examples and pragmatic notes (Laufer & Hadar, 1997). The absence of such features in learner's dictionaries reflects a misalignment between lexicographic practice and contemporary language teaching methodology.

The study demonstrates that linguocultural units in Uzbek–English learner's dictionaries are insufficiently represented from semantic, cultural, and pragmatic perspectives. Statistical analysis confirms that current lexicographic practices often fail to support accurate comprehension and appropriate usage.

Improving the treatment of idioms and figurative expressions requires an interdisciplinary approach integrating linguocultural theory, pragmatics, and pedagogical lexicography. Enhanced representation of linguocultural units will significantly contribute to learners' communicative and intercultural competence.

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