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FUNCTIONAL-SEMANTIC FIELD OF LOVE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Background. Love is one of the most extensively lexicalized emotion concepts, yet the way it is organized in the vocabularies of genetically and culturally distant languages remains insufficiently described. Aim. This article compares the functional-semantic field of love in English and Uzbek and identifies the lexical, semantic, phraseological and contextual means that represent it. Methods. Drawing on functional-semantic field theory [1; 6; 8], the study applies descriptive, componential-semantic, comparative, contextual and linguocultural analysis to lexical and phraseological material from explanatory and bilingual dictionaries [2; 12; 13; 14]. Results. Both languages organize the field around a semantic core and a graded periphery: English around love, Uzbek around sevgi and muhabbat. Both share universal components, namely emotional attachment, affection, devotion and romantic feeling [11]. English differentiates types of love chiefly through separate lexemes (affection, fondness, passion, devotion), whereas Uzbek links the concept more closely to mehr (warmth), sadoqat (loyalty) and ehtirom (reverence), and reserves ishq for intense, poetic love. Equivalence between the two lexical systems is mostly partial. Conclusion. The field is universal in its basic emotional content but culturally specific in its lexical organization and contextual realization.

Keywords

functional-semantic field, love, affection, emotion concepts, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics, phraseology, linguoculture.

Introduction

Language expresses not only objective reality but also the emotional and cultural experience of its speakers. Among emotion concepts, love holds a special place: almost every language represents it through a wide range of lexical, grammatical, phraseological and stylistic resources [5; 11]. Its linguistic representation is therefore a

productive object of study in semantics, cognitive linguistics, comparative linguistics and linguoculturology.

Love is a complex, multidimensional concept. It may denote romantic attachment, affection for family members, friendship, devotion to one's country, religious feeling, or general sympathy and care. No single lexical unit covers all of these meanings; instead, a set of interconnected units forms a semantic system around a central concept [6; 8; 11].

The functional-semantic field approach describes such systems as structured sets of linguistic units united by a common semantic function. A field consists of a core, which contains the most central and semantically general units, and a periphery, which contains more specific, contextual, stylistic or metaphorical expressions [1; 3].

English and Uzbek are well suited to a comparison of this kind. English is a Germanic language of the Indo-European family; Uzbek belongs to the Turkic family. The two have developed in different historical and cultural settings, so their comparison can reveal both universal and language-specific patterns in how love is conceptualized and verbalized. Emotion vocabulary has been compared across languages and cultures [11], and the emotional lexicon of English has been described in some detail [9]. However, the love vocabulary of English and Uzbek has rarely been examined side by side within a single field model, which is the gap this article addresses.

The aim of the study is to identify and compare the main lexical-semantic components of the functional-semantic field of love in English and Uzbek, and to establish their similarities and differences in linguistic and cultural representation.

The **objectives** are:

1. to identify the semantic core of the field in both languages;
2. to examine the peripheral lexical units associated with love;
3. to analyze phraseological and contextual expressions of love;
4. to compare the semantic structures of the relevant lexical units;
5. to identify culturally specific features of the representation of love.

The study is guided by two research questions: (1) which components of the field are shared by English and Uzbek, and (2) how do the two languages differ in the lexical organization and cultural connotations of the field?

Materials and Methods

The material comprises lexical, phraseological, explanatory, bilingual and contextual data in English and Uzbek. The English units examined are love, affection, fondness, liking, devotion, passion, attachment, adoration and care. The Uzbek units are sevgi, muhabbat, mehr, ishq, sadoqat, ehtirom and g'amxo'rlik. Definitions and usage were taken from explanatory and bilingual dictionaries [2; 12; 13], and idiomatic expressions from the phraseological dictionary of Uzbek [14]. Illustrative sentences are given with English glosses.

Methods

The study combines five complementary methods:

1. Descriptive method: identifies and describes the units that make up the field of love in each language.

2. Componential-semantic analysis: determines the shared and distinctive semantic components of the units [6; 8; 10]. For example, English love and Uzbek sevgi and muhabbat share the component 'strong positive emotional attachment', while contextual and cultural components distinguish them.

3. Comparative method: establishes similarities and differences between the English and Uzbek lexical systems.

4. Contextual analysis: examines how the meaning of a unit changes with its linguistic environment. For instance, love in love for one's family is realized differently from love in a romantic relationship, although both belong to the same field [4; 6].

5. Linguocultural analysis: relates the verbal representation of love to culturally significant values [7; 11].

Model of the field

Following the functional-semantic approach [1; 3], the field is modelled as a gradient:

Core → near periphery → far periphery

The core contains the most general and frequent units that directly denote love and strong affection. The near periphery contains units that express particular types or degrees of love. The far periphery contains metaphorical, idiomatic, contextual and stylistically marked expressions. The boundaries between these zones are treated as fluid, not fixed.

Results. The semantic core in English

The central unit of the English field is love. Its semantic range is broad: it can express romantic affection, familial attachment, friendship, care, or strong positive feeling toward an object, activity or idea [2; 6]. Examples: She loves her children. They fell in love. He has a deep love for music. Love for one's country is an important cultural value. This breadth allows love to represent the whole field.

Other units occupy positions determined by intensity and specialization [2; 9]:

• affection: a gentle feeling of fondness or attachment (She has great affection for her grandmother);

• fondness: a mild, warm liking (He has a particular fondness for old books);

• passion: strong, intense feeling, often romantic or sexual (Their relationship was characterized by intense passion);

• devotion: loyalty, dedication and commitment (Her devotion to her family was remarkable);

• adoration: extremely strong admiration or love (The child looked at his mother with adoration).

The English field is thus differentiated by intensity, object, duration and type of emotional relationship [2; 6; 9].

The semantic core in Uzbek

The Uzbek core consists of sevgi and muhabbat. Both denote love, but their contextual and stylistic functions differ [12; 13].

Sevgi is a broad, common term covering romantic, familial and general emotional attachment: Ona sevgisi beqiyosdir ('A mother's love is incomparable'); Uning qalbida Vatanga nisbatan sevgi bor ('There is love for the homeland in his heart').

Muhabbat is more elevated and literary, and is associated with romantic love, deep affection and idealized attachment [12]: Ular o'rtasida samimiy muhabbat bor edi ('There was sincere love between them'); Muhabbat inson qalbini o'zgartirishi mumkin ('Love can change the human heart').

Mehr denotes warmth, tenderness, affection and emotional closeness. Unlike muhabbat, it is especially productive in family and interpersonal contexts [12; 13]: ona

mehri ('a mother's affection'), mehribon ona ('a loving mother'), mehr ko'rsatmoq ('to show affection or care'). Its semantic structure combines warmth, kindness, tenderness and emotional care.

Peripheral components

The peripheral zones contain units that express particular aspects of love [1; 3]. Table 1 lists the main ones. Exact one-to-one equivalents are often missing: one English word may correspond to several Uzbek words depending on context, and vice versa [6; 11].

Table 1. Peripheral units of the field

English	**Meaning**	**Uzbek**	**Meaning**
care	concern and attention	g'amxo'rlik	care and concern
liking	positive but weaker feeling	moyillik	inclination, liking
attachment	emotional connection or dependence	bog'lanish	attachment
devotion	deep loyalty and dedication	sadoqat	loyalty and devotion
passion	intense emotional attraction	ishq	passionate, intense love
adoration	extremely strong admiration or love	ehtirom	respect and reverence
tenderness	gentle affection	mehr	warmth, tenderness, affection

Love, sevgi, muhabbat and ishq

English love is semantically broad and fits almost any context of strong positive attachment: romantic, familial, friendly, religious, or enthusiasm for an activity [2; 6]. Uzbek sevgi is equally broad and serves as the general term, whereas muhabbat conveys greater emotional depth and literary elevation [12]. Ishq denotes passionate, intense and often idealized love; it has strong literary and cultural associations and is especially frequent in poetic discourse [7; 12]. Table 2 gives the approximate correspondences.

Table 2. Approximate English–Uzbek correspondences

English	**Uzbek**	**Main semantic component**
love	sevgi	general love and emotional attachment
love	muhabbat	deep, emotional love
passion	ishq	intense, passionate love
affection	mehr	warmth and affection

devotion	sadoqat	loyalty and devotion
care	g'amxo'rlik	concern and care
admiration, reverence	ehtirom	respect and esteem

These correspondences are approximate, since semantic fields seldom coincide fully across languages [6; 11].

Phraseological representation

Phraseological units show culturally established ways of conceptualizing emotions [3; 14]. English examples include fall in love, be in love, love at first sight, have a crush on someone, wear one's heart on one's sleeve and heart of gold. Fall in love presents the onset of love as a change of state; love at first sight stresses its sudden emergence.

Uzbek has comparable expressions built around the heart and inner feelings [14]:

• ko'ngil bermoq: to give one's heart or affection to someone;

• ko'ngliga yo'l topmoq: to win someone's affection;

• yuragidan joy olmoq: to occupy a place in someone's heart;

• mehr qo'ymoq: to become attached to, to love;

• dilidan o'tkazmoq: to feel deeply, to experience inwardly.

In both languages love is conceptualized through the metaphorical domains of heart, soul, inner feelings, closeness and attachment [4; 11; 14].

3.6. Structure of the field

Table 3 summarizes the core and periphery of the field in each language [1; 3].

Table 3. Core and periphery of the field of love

Zone	**English**	**Uzbek**
Core	love	sevgi, muhabbat
Near periphery	affection, fondness, devotion, passion, attachment, adoration, care	mehr, ishq, sadoqat, g'amxo'rlik, ehtirom
Far periphery	liking, tenderness, admiration, romantic attraction, idioms	ko'ngil bermoq, mehr qo'ymoq, yuragidan joy olmoq, ko'ngliga yo'l topmoq, other contextual and phraseological expressions

The boundaries between zones are not rigid: a unit may move toward the center or the periphery depending on frequency, context, genre and communicative function [1; 3].

Discussion

Universal components

The results support the view that emotion concepts share a universal basis while differing in their linguistic packaging [11]. Both languages have a broad core term (love; sevgi) and a set of peripheral units expressing intensity, loyalty, care and respect. The shared semantic components are emotional attachment, affection, devotion and romantic feeling. Both languages also use the same conceptual metaphors, with the heart and soul as the seat of love and closeness as its image [4; 11; 14].

Language-specific organization

The two systems differ in how they divide the field. English distinguishes types of love mainly by separate lexemes and by phraseology: affection, fondness, passion and devotion each isolate one dimension of the concept [2; 9]. Uzbek divides the core stylistically and in terms of register: sevgi is general, muhabbat is elevated and literary, and ishq is intense and poetic [12]. Uzbek mehr also combines warmth, tenderness and care in one unit, so translating it may require several English words, such as affection, tenderness and care. Conversely, English love has no single Uzbek equivalent: the choice of sevgi, muhabbat, mehr or ishq depends on context and style [6; 11]. Equivalence is therefore partial, as semantic theory would predict [6; 8; 10].

Cultural connotations

In English, the lexical field readily separates romantic attraction, affection, personal preference, devotion and care, and expressions of individual emotional choice are frequent. In Uzbek, love is closely tied to mehr, sadoqat, oila (family), hurmat (respect) and ehtirom. It is often presented as a relationship involving care, respect, loyalty and social responsibility rather than only as an individual feeling [7; 11; 12].

This contrast should not be read as an absolute opposition between two cultures. Both languages express every major form of love; the difference lies in the frequency, semantic associations, stylistic preferences and cultural connotations of particular units. Since the field has no rigid boundaries, a unit may also shift between core and periphery depending on genre and communicative function [1; 3].

Limitations and further research

The study is based on a selected set of dictionary-attested units and illustrative examples. It does not report corpus frequencies, so the claims about frequency and stylistic preference are qualitative. Further research could test them on parallel and national corpora, extend the field to other relevant units (for example hurmat and oshiqlik), and compare diachronic development in the two languages.

Conclusion

The functional-semantic field of love in English and Uzbek is universal in its emotional content but differentiated in its linguistic and cultural realization [11]. In both languages it is organized around central lexical units and a graded periphery that expresses types, degrees and manifestations of emotional attachment.

In English, love is the principal central unit, while affection, fondness, passion, devotion, attachment and adoration express different semantic dimensions. In Uzbek, sevgi and muhabbat occupy the core, and mehr, ishq, sadoqat, g'amxo'rlik and ehtirom express affection, passion, loyalty, care and respect [2; 12; 13].

Equivalence between the two languages is mostly partial. Love may be rendered by sevgi, muhabbat, mehr or ishq, depending on context and style, while Uzbek mehr may require affection, tenderness and care in English [6; 11]. Phraseological units in both languages rely on conceptual metaphors of the heart, soul, inner feelings, closeness and attachment [4; 11; 14], while culturally specific associations reflect social values and traditions [7; 11].

The functional-semantic field approach thus proves effective for identifying universal and culture-specific features of emotional vocabulary [1; 3]. The findings are relevant to comparative semantics, linguoculturology and translation theory, and to the wider question of how languages encode human emotional experience.

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