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Lexical-Semantic Means of Expressing Emotion Concepts in the English and Uzbek Linguistic Worldviews

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Abstract: This article examines the lexical-semantic means through which emotion concepts are verbalised in the English and Uzbek linguistic worldviews. Drawing on cognitive and linguocultural approaches, it compares the lexical fields of four basic emotions — joy, sadness, anger and fear — across both languages. The analysis covers emotion nouns, adjectives and verbs, derivational patterns, paired words, phraseological units and conceptual metaphors. While the core metaphors are shared, the two languages disagree on where feelings live and who controls them. English tends to frame emotions as forces acting on a container-like self and centres them in the heart and head. Uzbek distributes emotional experience across several internal organs (yurak, jigar, bag‘ir) and the culture-specific concept ko‘ngil, and makes extensive use of paired words and somatic phraseology. These differences reflect distinct cultural models of the person and have practical value for translation, lexicography and teaching English to Uzbek learners.

Keywords: emotion concept, linguistic worldview, lexical-semantic field, conceptual metaphor, phraseological unit, somatism, English, Uzbek, ko‘ngil.

Introduction

Emotions are a universal part of human experience, but every language names, groups and evaluates them in its own way. The words a community uses for feelings form part of its linguistic worldview — the picture of reality fixed in the lexicon, grammar and phraseology of a language. Studying emotion vocabulary across languages therefore reveals both what is common to human cognition and what is specific to a given culture.

Why compare the emotion vocabulary of English and Uzbek at all? Cognitive linguistics has taught us to look beyond individual words to the concepts behind them, that is, to structures of knowledge built from bodily, social and cultural experience. Yet in emotion research English has mostly been compared with Russian, German or other European languages, and Uzbek has rarely been part of the picture. The gap is felt most sharply in translation and in the English classroom. An Uzbek learner who tries to render ko‘nglim qoldi or bag‘rim kuydi in English soon finds that there is no ready-made equivalent, because the two languages do not draw the map of feelings in the same way. Describing where these maps coincide and where they part is the practical motivation behind this study.

The aim of the article is to identify and compare the lexical-semantic means that verbalise emotion concepts in English and Uzbek. To reach this aim, the study sets the following objectives:

1. to define the notions of emotion concept and linguistic worldview within a cognitive framework;
2. to describe the lexical-semantic fields of JOY, SADNESS, ANGER and FEAR in both languages;
3. to analyse derivational, phraseological and metaphorical means of expressing these emotions;

4. to determine universal and culture-specific features of emotion conceptualisation in English and Uzbek.

Literature Review

The idea that language shapes a distinct view of the world goes back to Wilhelm von Humboldt and was later developed in the Sapir-Whorf tradition. In Russian and Uzbek linguistics, this idea took the form of the theory of the linguistic picture of the world (языковая картина мира), elaborated by Yu. D. Apresjan (1995), Yu. S. Stepanov (1997) and V. A. Maslova (2001), while V. I. Shakhovsky (1987) applied it specifically to the categorisation of emotions in the lexical system. In this view, each language encodes a naive, everyday model of reality, including a model of the human being and their inner life.

The notion of **concept** is central to this tradition. Stepanov (1997) describes a concept as a "bundle" of culture in a person's mind, through which culture enters the mental world of the individual. An emotion concept, accordingly, is a culturally shaped mental unit that integrates a feeling's name, its typical causes, bodily signs, evaluation and behavioural scripts.

Within Western cognitive linguistics, two lines of research are especially relevant. Anna Wierzbicka (1999) argued that English emotion words such as sadness, anger or happiness are not universal categories but culture-specific ones, and proposed describing them through semantic primes (e.g. someone feels something bad because...). Zoltán Kövecses (2000), building on the conceptual metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), showed that emotions are largely understood through metaphors and metonymies grounded in bodily experience, such as ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER. Psychological research on basic emotions (Plutchik, 1980; Ekman, 1992) provides a widely used list of core feelings, which this study takes as its starting point.

In Uzbek linguistics, cognitive and linguocultural approaches were introduced and developed by Sh. Safarov (2006) and his followers. Uzbek phraseology, including its rich layer of somatic expressions, has been systematically described by Sh. Rahmatullayev (1978). Studies of individual Uzbek concepts have highlighted the importance of ko'ngil as a key unit of the national worldview. Emotive units of the two languages have recently been compared from a linguopragmatic perspective (Kaxarova, 2024), and emotion idioms have been studied contrastively (Jabbarova, 2024). However, a systematic comparison of English and Uzbek emotion vocabulary across several levels — lexical, derivational, phraseological and metaphorical — is still lacking. The present study brings these levels together for four basic emotions, with particular attention to body-based expressions and the concept of ko'ngil.

Materials and Methods

The material of the study consists of emotion vocabulary drawn from explanatory, phraseological and bilingual dictionaries of both languages. For English, these include the Oxford English Dictionary, the Macmillan English Dictionary and the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms. For Uzbek, the main sources are the five-volume O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati (2006–2008) and Sh. Rahmatullayev's O'zbek tilining izohli frazeologik lug'ati (1978).

The study focuses on four basic emotion concepts: JOY, SADNESS, ANGER and FEAR. These were chosen because they appear in most classifications of basic emotions and are richly represented in both languages.

The following methods were applied:

- **componential analysis** — to identify the semantic features of emotion words from their dictionary definitions;

• **lexical-semantic field analysis** — to describe the nucleus and periphery of each emotion field;

• **conceptual analysis** — to reconstruct the cognitive features of each concept from its linguistic means;

• **conceptual metaphor analysis** — following Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2000);

• **contrastive method** — to establish universal and culture-specific features across the two languages.

Results and Discussion

The lexical nucleus of emotion fields

In both languages, each emotion concept is verbalised by a field with a dominant word at its centre and a series of synonyms that differ in intensity, duration and stylistic colouring. Table 1 shows the core and near-core units of the four fields.

Table 1. Core lexical units of four emotion fields

Concept	English (nucleus → periphery)	Uzbek (nucleus → periphery)
JOY	joy, happiness, delight, gladness, elation, bliss, glee	quvonch, shodlik, xursandchilik, xushnudlik, sevinch, zavq
SADNESS	sadness, sorrow, grief, misery, melancholy, gloom	g‘am, qayg‘u, alam, hasrat, g‘ussa, mung, dard
ANGER	anger, rage, fury, wrath, irritation, annoyance, indignation	g‘azab, jahl, qahr, achchiq, zarda, nafrat
FEAR	fear, fright, terror, horror, dread, panic, anxiety	qo‘rquv, vahima, dahshat, xavotir, tahlika, cho‘chish

In English and Uzbek grade emotions by intensity: English annoyance → anger → rage → fury has a close parallel in Uzbek zarda → jahl → g‘azab → qahr. The Uzbek fields contain a significant layer of Arabic and Persian borrowings (g‘am, alam, hasrat, g‘azab, qahr, dahshat), which often carry an elevated, literary or religious tone. This layer coexists with native Turkic words (qo‘rquv, sevinch, achchiq), producing fine stylistic contrasts (see also Raxmonova, 2021). English shows a similar split between native words (fear, sorrow, wrath) and Latin or French borrowings (terror, fury, delight), though here the borrowed words tend to mark higher intensity rather than a religious register.

The Uzbek words dard and mung are especially culture-specific. Dard combines physical pain, emotional suffering and longing, while mung denotes a quiet, lyrical sorrow typical of folk songs. Neither has a single English equivalent; they are rendered as pain, grief, sorrow or melancholy depending on context.

Derivational means and paired words

Both languages form emotion vocabulary productively through derivation. In English, suffixes such as -ful (joyful, fearful, sorrowful), -less (fearless, joyless), -ous (furious, joyous) and the pair -ed / -ing (frightened / frightening, annoyed / annoying) express the emotional state and its cause. The -ed / -ing contrast is grammatically marked in English and frequently causes errors for Uzbek learners.

In Uzbek, the main derivational means are -li (g‘amli, qayg‘uli, jahlli), -siz (qo‘rqmas, g‘amsiz), -chilik (xursandchilik), and verb-forming affixes such as -lan- and -a- (g‘azablanmoq, qayg‘urmoq, quvonmoq). Causative forms (quvontirmoq, qo‘rqitmoq, xafa qilmoq) express the cause of the emotion, performing the function that English often assigns to -ing adjectives or causative verbs (to delight, to frighten).

A distinctive feature of Uzbek is the wide use of **paired words** (juft so‘zlar): quvonch-shodlik, g‘am-g‘ussa, qayg‘u-alam, dard-alam, xursand-xurram, qo‘rquv-vahima. Paired words intensify the emotion and give it a generalised, total character. English has only isolated binomials of this kind (joy and happiness, fear and trembling, grief and sorrow), and they lack the grammatical productivity of the Uzbek pattern.

Phraseological units and somatisms

Phraseological units are the most culturally marked layer of emotion vocabulary. In both languages, many of them are **somatisms** — expressions based on body parts that metonymically represent bodily signs of an emotion. Contrastive studies have shown that such idioms reflect the values of each culture while sharing a common figurative base (Jabbarova, 2024). Table 2 compares typical examples.

Table 2. Somatic phraseological units expressing emotions

Concept	English	Uzbek	Body part / image
JOY	over the moon; on cloud nine; jump for joy	boshi osmonga yetdi; og‘zi qulog‘ida; ko‘ngli tog‘dek ko‘tarildi	head, mouth, ko‘ngil; upward movement
SADNESS	heart sank; broken-hearted; down in the dumps	yuragi ezildi; bag‘ri kuydi; jigari qon bo‘ldi	heart, bag‘ir, liver; burning, crushing
ANGER	blow one’s top; make one’s blood boil; hot under the collar	jahli chiqdi; qoni qaynadi; tepa sochi tikka bo‘ldi	blood, head, hair; heat and pressure
FEAR	heart in one’s mouth; scared stiff; get cold feet	yuragi yorilay dedi; o‘takasi yorildi; joni chiqib ketdi	heart, gall, soul; bursting, leaving the body

In both languages, joy is linked with upward movement (over the moon / boshi osmonga yetdi), anger with heat and boiling blood (make one’s blood boil / qoni qaynadi), and fear with disturbed heart activity. Such similarities are hardly surprising: anger makes people feel hot in any culture.

At the same time, the inventory of emotional organs differs. English concentrates emotions mainly in the heart and partly in the head and blood. Uzbek distributes them among yurak (heart), jigar (liver), bag‘ir (liver/chest, the seat of compassion), o‘t / o‘taka (gall) and ko‘ngil, a feature linked to the national-cultural specificity of Uzbek somatic phraseology (Sayfullayev, 2024). The liver in Uzbek is a seat of deep affection and grief: jigarim (literally “my liver”) is an affectionate address to a close relative, and jigari ezildi expresses heart-breaking pity. In English the liver carries no such emotional meaning, and these units must be translated through the image of the heart.

Conceptual metaphors

Conceptual metaphor analysis shows that both languages understand emotions through similar source domains, but with different emphases.

- **EMOTION IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER.** English: filled with joy, brimming with anger, bottle up one’s feelings. Uzbek: ko‘ngli to‘ldi, ichi to‘la alam, dardini ichiga yutdi.
- **ANGER IS HEAT / FIRE.** English: burning with rage, simmering anger, flare up. Uzbek: g‘azabi alangalandi, yuragi yondi, o‘t bo‘lib yondi.
- **SADNESS IS DOWN / HEAVINESS.** English: feel down, heavy-hearted, low spirits. Uzbek: ko‘ngli cho‘kdi, yuragi og‘ir, boshi egildi.

• **SADNESS IS BURNING.** This metaphor is far more productive in Uzbek (bag‘ri kuydi, dardi kuydirdi, ichi yondi) than in English, where burning is associated mainly with anger and desire.

• **EMOTION IS AN OPPONENT / FORCE.** English: seized by fear, overcome with grief, gripped by panic. Uzbek: qo‘rquv chulg‘ab oldi, g‘am bosdi, vahima qamrab oldi.

English and Uzbek disagree on who is in charge: the person or the feeling. English often frames the person as controlling or failing to control the emotion (keep one’s temper, lose one’s temper, pull oneself together). Uzbek more often presents the emotion as an independent agent acting on the person: jahli chiqdi (“his anger came out”), g‘am bosdi (“grief pressed down”), qo‘rquv chulg‘ab oldi (“fear wrapped him”). This reflects a less individualistic model of the self, in which feelings are experienced as events rather than as states to be managed.

Ko‘ngil as a key concept of the Uzbek emotional worldview

The concept ko‘ngil has no direct equivalent in English. Depending on context, it may be translated as heart, soul, mind, mood or desire. It denotes the inner seat of feelings, wishes and moral sensitivity, and appears in a large number of emotion expressions: ko‘ngli ko‘tarildi (“cheered up”), ko‘ngli cho‘kdi (“became sad”), ko‘ngli qoldi (“was offended”), ko‘nglini oldi (“comforted, won over”), ko‘ngli buzildi (“was moved to tears”), ko‘ngli yumshoq (“soft-hearted”).

Ko‘ngil is conceptualised as fragile and valuable, like a vessel that can be broken or filled. Uzbek culture places strong value on not “breaking” another person’s ko‘ngil (ko‘ngil og‘ritmaslik), which is linked to norms of respect, hospitality and indirectness. English heart covers part of this meaning (break someone’s heart, soft-hearted), but it is mainly associated with love and compassion, while ko‘ngil also includes mood, appetite, will and social sensitivity. For translators and teachers, ko‘ngil is therefore a clear case of a lacuna requiring contextual, rather than word-for-word, rendering.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the concepts JOY, SADNESS, ANGER and FEAR shows that English and Uzbek share a common embodied basis for conceptualising emotions, but shape it according to different cultural models of the person.

At the most general level, the two languages behave alike. Both organise emotion vocabulary into fields with a clear nucleus and a wider periphery, both English and Uzbek grade feelings by intensity, and both rely on the same core metaphors: emotion as a fluid in a container, anger as heat, and sadness as a downward movement.

The differences, however, are more revealing. Uzbek emotion fields contain a large layer of Arabic and Persian borrowings, which lends them a literary or religious colouring, and they include words such as dard and mung that have no exact English equivalent. Where English relies mostly on derivation, Uzbek makes wide use of paired words such as g‘am-g‘ussa and quvonch-shodlik. Perhaps the most striking contrast lies in where feelings are located: English places them mainly in the heart and head, while Uzbek spreads them across several organs (yurak, jigar, bag‘ir, o‘t) and the concept of ko‘ngil. Uzbek also tends to present emotions as forces that act on a person, whereas English more often treats them as states the person controls.

The study has several limitations. Its material comes mainly from dictionaries, which record established usage but say little about how often these units occur in everyday speech. The analysis is also restricted to four basic emotions, so its conclusions may not hold for more complex feelings such as shame or envy.

These results are relevant to translation, bilingual lexicography and English language teaching in Uzbekistan. Somatic phraseology and ko‘ngil-based expressions in particular require contextual

translation rather than literal equivalents. Further research may extend the analysis to secondary emotions such as shame, pride and envy, and use corpus data to measure the frequency of the units described.

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