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LINGUOCULTUROLOGY AND MODERN LEXICOGRAPHY

Orziyeva Shohsanam Ziyodulla qizi
PhD student, Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

AbstractЖ The present article is devoted to the analysis of linguocultural units represented in lexicographic sources. Wilhelm von Humboldt's ideas concerning the role of language in the perception of reality and the formation of a worldview among native speakers have entered a new stage of development within the framework of a contemporary linguistic paradigm—linguoculturology, which investigates the interrelationship between language and culture. Linguocultural analysis of linguistic units makes it possible to reveal the mental and cultural characteristics of a particular linguistic community. Culturally marked units encompass a wide range of spheres of social and cultural life. Within the category of culture-specific vocabulary, several semantic groups may be distinguished. A considerable number of culture-specific words, predominantly nouns, denote individuals according to their ideological affiliation, religious beliefs, marital status, occupation, personal inclinations, character traits, social status, and gender identity. Proper names—particularly anthroponyms and toponyms (names of states, cities, urbanonyms, etc.)—occupy a prominent place among the units under investigation.

Keywords: linguoculturology, lexicography, linguistic community, evaluation, culture-specific units, forms of address.

Introduction

At the turn of the twenty-first century, modern linguistic scholarship witnessed the emergence of a new scientific paradigm known as **linguoculturology**, whose intellectual origins can be traced back to the ideas of the German philosopher and linguist **Wilhelm von Humboldt**. As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, Humboldt emphasized the inseparable relationship between language, thought, and the spirit of a nation (Volksgeist).

Humboldt's ideas were revived during the twentieth century within two major scholarly traditions: **Neo-Humboldtian linguistics** in Germany and the **Sapir–Whorf theory of linguistic relativity** in the United States. The development of Humboldtian thought proceeded along two principal directions.

On the one hand, scholars often overemphasized the concept of the worldview embodied in the native language (Weltansicht der Muttersprache), by which Humboldt understood the capacity of each language to segment and conceptualize reality in its own unique way. It may be argued that Humboldt somewhat exaggerated the role of language in shaping an individual's worldview. Likewise, his assertion that "with every new language a person enters a new system of thoughts and feelings" cannot be accepted uncritically.

The study of foreign languages demonstrates that each language presents a distinct mosaic of conceptualization—partly similar to that of the native language, yet partly different in its linguistic means of expression. For example, the notion of heavy rainfall is represented through different metaphorical images in various languages:

- Russian: Dozhd' l'yot kak iz vedra ("It is pouring as if from a bucket");
- English: It is raining cats and dogs;
- German: Es regnet wie aus der Mulde ("It rains as if from a trough");

- French: Il pleut à torrents, Il pleut à verse;
- Bashkir: yamğır qoyop yawa (“the rain pours down”);
- Tatar: yañğır çiläkläp qoya (“it rains in buckets”).

The most productive aspects of Humboldt’s theoretical legacy have found further development in contemporary linguocultural studies, which maintain close connections with cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, pragmalinguistics, communicative linguistics, and translation studies.

As a discipline investigating the interaction and interdependence of language and culture, linguoculturology examines manifestations of culture that are reflected and preserved in a national language. Linguocultural analysis of linguistic units enables researchers to reveal the mental characteristics of a particular linguocultural community, describe the national and cultural specificity of communicative categories, and explain the significance of culturally important concepts.

Among the fundamental notions of linguoculturology are the concepts of **evaluation** and **value**. Attempts to establish a systematic methodological framework for the cognitive-communicative analysis of evaluative language contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of human cognition as manifested within a specific national-cultural community.

However, the distinction between **ethno-cultural** and **linguocultural** phenomena remains a matter of scholarly debate. According to E. M. Wolf, evaluation is connected with the evaluator’s perception of how a particular object or event corresponds to the normative state of affairs or to the standards accepted within a given society.

Evaluation, in turn, is determined by value orientations characteristic not merely of individual speakers but of the linguistic community as a whole or of particular social groups within that community. In this respect, value serves as one of the fundamental components of culture.

Values and Culturally Marked Lexical Units

Values may be classified according to their degree of significance for different levels of human society: humanity as a whole, a religious community, an ethnic group, or a particular social stratum within an ethnic community. For instance, the historical hypertoponym Drittes Reich (“Third Reich”), associated with the period of National Socialist dictatorship in Germany, evokes associations with crimes against humanity in many countries, particularly those that participated in the Second World War.

In some cases, the same lexical unit may simultaneously carry both positive and negative evaluative associations. For example, the city of Nuremberg is known internationally as the location of the trials of major Nazi war criminals, where the criminal nature of German fascism was publicly exposed. At the same time, Nuremberg is recognized as an important cultural center with rich traditions and historical heritage. This dual image is reflected in its figurative names such as Meistersingerstadt (“City of the Meistersingers”), Dürerstadt (“City of Dürer”), Hans-Sachs-Stadt (“City of Hans Sachs”), Stadt des Spielzeugs (“City of Toys”), and Stadt der Lebkuchen und der Bratwürste (“City of Gingerbread and Sausages”). Similarly, Moscow’s Red Square functions not only as the political center of Russia’s capital but also as a symbol associated with numerous historical events that evoke patriotic sentiment.

Culturally marked, or culture-specific, lexical units encompass a broad range of aspects of social life. In analyzing such units, the authors rely on V. N. Telia’s definition of evaluation as a relationship established between the value orientation of speakers and listeners and the designated reality, which is assessed positively or negatively according to emotional, ethical, utilitarian, or other criteria accepted within a particular worldview. However, replacing the notion of an individual speaker’s value orientation with the concept of value orientations accepted within a

linguistic community provides a more objective perspective. Therefore, evaluation may be defined as a socially established attitude of language users toward extra-linguistic objects and toward facts of language and speech themselves.

Distribution of Cultural Vocabulary Across Parts of Speech

Cultural vocabulary is distributed unevenly among parts of speech. According to the data analyzed from the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, among 360 lexical units marked by the label cultural note:

- 319 units (over 88%) are nouns;
- 36 units (approximately 11%) are adjectives and verbs;
- only 5 units (about 1%) belong to other grammatical categories.

Among nouns, several semantic groups can be distinguished.

1. Nouns Denoting Rituals and Ceremonies

One of the most significant groups includes nouns referring to rituals and traditional celebrations.

A notable example is **Thanksgiving Day**, a national holiday in the United States commemorating the first settlers of Massachusetts. The holiday is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November and is associated with the historical experiences of the Pilgrims who arrived in North America in 1621. Many of these settlers suffered from famine during their first winter and survived only after learning agricultural practices from Indigenous peoples. Today, Americans often visit historical locations connected with these events, particularly Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Traditional Thanksgiving meals typically include:

- roast turkey with stuffing,
- sweet potatoes,
- various vegetables,
- pumpkin pie and other desserts.

Thus, the holiday functions not merely as a calendrical event but also as a powerful linguocultural symbol reflecting national historical memory.

Toponyms as Linguocultural Units

A large number of linguoculturally significant units are represented by toponyms, including the names of countries, regions, cities, and urban objects.

For example, Colombia may function as a symbolic reference to cocaine production in international discourse.

Another illustrative case is Londonderry (or Derry). According to the cultural description cited in the dictionary, the city frequently appears in public discourse because of historical violence between Protestant and Catholic communities. The name Londonderry itself reflects historical ties with the City of London.

A particularly prominent example is **the Wild West**, a toponym that has become deeply embedded in global popular culture. It is associated with films known as westerns, depicting conflicts between Native Americans and cowboys or between sheriffs and outlaws. Such representations often bear little resemblance to historical reality but have become powerful cultural myths.

The linguistic significance of this concept is demonstrated by its international diffusion:

- English: western;
- German: Western, Wildwestfilm;

- Russian: вестерн;
- French: western.

In this case, the original geographical designation evolved into an ideonym—a cultural product and artistic genre recognized across linguistic boundaries.

2. Personal Designations and Anthroponyms

A substantial proportion of culture-specific nouns denote individuals according to:

- ideological affiliation,
- religious identity,
- marital status,
- occupation,
- character traits,
- behavioral tendencies,
- social status.

Anthroponyms (personal names) also occupy a central position among linguocultural units.

Interestingly, only a limited number of U.S. presidents receive detailed cultural commentary in English-language dictionaries. For example, **Franklin D. Roosevelt** is described as a highly respected and popular president who communicated directly with citizens through his famous fireside chats and became the first American president to appear on television.

Similarly, **George Washington** occupies a unique position in American cultural memory. Americans associate him with the War of Independence and regard him as an embodiment of honesty, integrity, and patriotism. He is frequently referred to as the Father of His Country, and his birthday, February 22, has been designated a national holiday.

The fact that many other presidents receive no comparable cultural commentary demonstrates that the American linguistic community attributes a particularly high symbolic value to the historical roles of Roosevelt and Washington.

Culture-Specific Lexical Units in Lexicographic Description

An important issue in modern lexicography is that bilingual dictionaries frequently fail to capture the linguocultural component of lexical meaning. As a result, important cultural associations known to native speakers remain invisible to foreign language learners and translators.

A notable example is the English noun **milkman**. While bilingual dictionaries typically define the word simply as a person who sells or delivers milk, English cultural dictionaries include an additional sociocultural association. In British popular humor, milkmen have traditionally been the subject of jokes implying romantic or sexual relationships with housewives whose husbands are away at work. This culturally embedded stereotype constitutes an important component of the word's connotative meaning that is usually omitted in ordinary dictionaries.

Another example is the noun **osteopath**. General dictionaries define it as a specialist who treats physical ailments through manipulation of muscles and bones. However, British cultural commentary notes that osteopaths typically receive specialized training in osteopathy but are generally **not qualified medical doctors** and usually do not work within the National Health Service. This evaluative and cultural component significantly influences public perception of the profession.

Similarly, the expression **window cleaner** possesses a humorous cultural connotation in British society. Popular jokes portray window cleaners as accidental witnesses to unusual or intimate situations occurring inside homes while they perform their work. Such associations are not

part of the denotative meaning but form an integral component of the cultural knowledge shared by native speakers.

German Culture-Specific Lexical Units

Twentieth-century German history generated a large number of linguoculturally significant lexical items reflecting ideological and political realities.

One such example is **Schattenmann** ("shadow man"), a propaganda figure employed in Nazi Germany during the final years of the Second World War. In official discourse, the term symbolized an internal enemy or a citizen who lacked sufficient political vigilance. Nazi propaganda encouraged people to distrust everyone around them, metaphorically suggesting that even one's own shadow could betray state secrets.

The forty-year existence of two separate German states—the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR)—also produced numerous linguoculturally marked expressions.

Prior to German reunification:

- residents of East Germany were often called **Ostler** in West Germany;
- residents of West Germany were referred to in the East as **Westler** or **Wessi**.

Following reunification, new linguistic forms emerged. One of the most significant is **Ossi**, a colloquial designation for inhabitants of the former East German territories. Another notable example is **Ostalgie**, a blend of Osten ("East") and Nostalgie ("nostalgia"), referring to a sentimental longing for aspects of life in the former GDR. This term reflects the idealization of the socialist past among certain East Germans and has become a powerful cultural symbol in contemporary German society.

The linguistic division between East and West Germany also contributed to semantic divergence. Certain words existed exclusively within one political system, while others acquired ideologically conditioned meanings.

For example:

Vocabulary Characteristic of West Germany

- **Kontakter** – advertising specialist responsible for maintaining customer relations;
- **Aufbaudarlehen** – construction loan;
- **Arbeitsteam** – work team.

Vocabulary Characteristic of East Germany

- **Helfer der Polizei** – volunteer police assistant;
- **Direktstudent** – full-time student;
- **Betriebs-Akademie** – workplace-based professional training system.

Ideological Connotations in Lexical Meaning

Even after reunification, dictionaries continued to preserve lexical items reflecting ideological distinctions.

A notable example is the German noun **Kollektiv** (collective). In German dictionaries, one of its meanings explicitly refers to a work or production community united by socialist ideals and common ideological convictions. In contrast, the English word **collective** lacks this ideological component and is typically defined simply as a group of people working together for mutual benefit or as a worker-owned enterprise.

Russian linguoculture provides many similar examples.

The pejorative noun **совок** (sovok) may refer:

1. to the Soviet Union or Soviet authority;
2. to a citizen of the Soviet Union;
3. to a person who retains habits and attitudes associated with communist ideology.

The term carries a strongly negative evaluative connotation and reflects post-Soviet reassessment of the communist past.

Another example is **блокадник**, referring to a person who survived the Siege of Leningrad during World War II. The lexical meaning of the word is inseparable from collective historical memory and national experience.

The noun **отказник** (otkaznik) likewise illustrates the interaction between language and historical reality. The term originally referred to a person denied permission to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Later it acquired additional meanings, including conscientious objectors refusing military service and children abandoned by their parents. Interestingly, the word entered English and French through hybrid formations:

- English: **refusenik**
- French: **refuznik**

Both borrowings preserve the Russian suffix **-nik**, demonstrating how culturally specific concepts may become international lexical units

Forms of Address as Linguocultural Indicators

One of the most revealing areas of linguocultural change concerns forms of address used for women. English, German, and French demonstrate similar tendencies in the evolution of gender-related linguistic norms.

Historically, English distinguished between:

- **Miss** – an unmarried woman;
- **Mrs.** – a married woman.

However, contemporary American English increasingly avoids emphasizing marital status. According to cultural notes in English dictionaries, the title **Miss** has become relatively uncommon except when referring to beauty contests or very young girls (e.g., Miss World, Miss Brazil). For females from their late teenage years onward, **Mrs.** or increasingly neutral forms are preferred. This shift reflects changing social attitudes toward women's social identity and the decreasing importance of marital status as a defining characteristic.

A similar process has occurred in German.

Traditionally:

- **Fräulein** referred to an unmarried woman;
- **Frau** referred to a married woman.

Modern German dictionaries explicitly recommend using **Frau** for all adult women regardless of age, marital status, or profession. The form **Fräulein** is now considered outdated and is generally used only if explicitly preferred by the woman herself. This linguistic development reflects broader social movements toward gender equality and the rejection of distinctions based solely on marital status.

French presents a similar, though somewhat more complex, picture.

Historically, **mademoiselle** functioned as the standard form of address for unmarried women, while **madame** was used for married women. However, under the influence of feminist movements in France, the use of **madame** has increasingly replaced **mademoiselle** even for young unmarried women. As a result, all three languages demonstrate a common tendency toward the unification of forms of address for women regardless of marital status.

Activities and Behaviors Subject to Cultural Evaluation

Certain nouns denote activities that receive positive or negative evaluation within a particular linguistic community.

A notable example is **fox hunting** in Britain.

Although fox hunting has long been regarded as a traditional aristocratic sport, many contemporary Britons view it negatively and consider it cruel to animals. Consequently, the expression carries not only descriptive meaning but also a strong evaluative component shaped by public opinion.

Another example is the noun **massage**.

While its primary meaning is entirely neutral, in British English advertisements offering massage services may sometimes imply prostitution. Consequently, the word can acquire euphemistic and socially sensitive connotations depending on the context. German demonstrates a similar phenomenon in compounds such as **Massagesalon**, which may also function euphemistically to refer to a brothel.

Historical Events Reflected in Language

Many culture-specific lexical units derive from significant historical events.

One such example is the German noun **Bücherverbrennung** ("book burning"), referring to the public destruction of books organized by the Nazi regime in 1933. The term has become a powerful symbol of censorship, ideological repression, and intellectual persecution.

Place names also acquire cultural significance through historical memory.

For instance, **Coventry** in England became a symbol of wartime devastation after suffering massive destruction during German air raids. The city's name subsequently gave rise to the verbs **coventrize** and **coventrate**, meaning "to subject a place to devastating aerial bombardment."

Similarly, **Dresden** occupies a comparable position in German collective memory due to the catastrophic bombing of the city during World War II. This tragedy inspired artistic works such as Dresdner Requiem ("Dresden Requiem"), composed by the Irish musician Cormac Shé Duffy as a reminder of the horrors of war. Today, Dresden and Coventry are united as sister cities, symbolizing reconciliation and peace.

Religious and Mythological Concepts

A significant group of culture-specific lexical units originates from religious traditions, mythology, and biblical narratives.

One example is **ordination**, meaning the act of being admitted to the priesthood.

English cultural dictionaries associate this term with debates within the Church of England regarding the ordination of women. In 1992, after extensive public discussion, the Church officially approved the ordination of female priests. However, many members of the Church continued to oppose the decision. Consequently, the word carries sociocultural and ideological associations extending beyond its strictly religious meaning.

Another example is **mistletoe**.

In British mythology, mistletoe was regarded as a sacred plant by the Druids. This ancient belief survives in the Christmas tradition according to which a person may kiss anyone of the opposite sex standing beneath a sprig of mistletoe. Thus, the word evokes a rich network of mythological and cultural associations.

The noun **manger** likewise possesses a strong cultural component. According to the biblical narrative, the infant Jesus was placed in a manger because no accommodation was available for his family. Consequently, the word is closely associated with Christian representations of the Nativity.

Similarly, **locust** evokes the biblical account of the plagues sent upon Egypt. In Christian cultural tradition, the word therefore symbolizes divine punishment and catastrophe rather than merely an insect species.

Toponyms and Secondary Nomination

Toponyms frequently acquire secondary names, figurative designations, and nicknames that reflect their historical, political, economic, or cultural significance. According to A. V. Urazmetova, the emergence of secondary nominations depends not so much on the size of a geographical object as on its role in the history, economy, politics, and culture of a country. Moreover, a single geographical object may possess several nicknames simultaneously.

A vivid example is **Los Angeles**, the second-largest city in the United States. In English-language cultural dictionaries, Los Angeles is characterized as the center of the American film industry, particularly Hollywood, where many wealthy and famous people reside. The city is also associated with favorable weather conditions, which attract migrants from other regions. However, critics of the city sometimes refer to it as **La-La-Land**, emphasizing its heavy traffic, industrialization, and social problems, including episodes of racial unrest that resulted in casualties and destruction of property. Thus, the same city may generate both positive and negative cultural evaluations.

Interestingly, not all major cities receive similar cultural treatment. For example, **Chicago**, despite being the third-largest city in the United States, lacks a comparable cultural note in the analyzed dictionary. This demonstrates that cultural salience rather than objective importance determines whether a geographical name becomes linguoculturally marked.

German culture offers numerous examples of figurative geographical designations:

- **Florenz des Nordens** (“Florence of the North”) – Dresden;
- **Florenz an der Elbe** (“Florence on the Elbe”) – Dresden;
- **Spree-Athen** (“Athens on the Spree”) – Berlin.

These secondary nominations highlight cultural prestige by comparing German cities with internationally recognized centers of civilization and art.

Family Relations as Linguocultural Phenomena

Terms denoting family relationships often contain important cultural information.

In British culture, many elderly women perceive direct use of their first name as insufficiently respectful. For example, a woman named Mary may prefer children to address her as **Auntie Mary** rather than simply Mary. Likewise, a man named John may prefer **Uncle John** rather than the direct use of his personal name.

Younger generations, by contrast, generally accept and even prefer first-name forms of address. Thus, linguistic behavior reflects age-related cultural norms and changing patterns of interpersonal communication.

Other kinship-related terms that possess cultural significance in English include:

- **marriage**
- **mother-in-law**
- **son-in-law**
- **daughter-in-law**
- **stepmother**

and numerous other family-related designations.

Particularly interesting is the noun **bachelor**.

In its meaning of "unmarried man," the term generally carries no negative connotation in Western societies. However, if a man remains unmarried into old age, some members of society may speculate about his sexual orientation. At the same time, society often shows less sympathy toward an unmarried man than toward an unmarried woman.

In its second meaning, **bachelor** refers to an academic degree holder, regardless of gender. Consequently, the word combines social and educational cultural meanings within a single lexical unit.

Months and Days of the Week as Cultural Symbols

Many names of months and days of the week possess cultural connotations extending far beyond their calendrical function.

According to the analyzed dictionary, eight of the twelve months are accompanied by cultural notes. Likewise, six of the seven weekdays carry culturally significant associations.

For English speakers, **October** is associated with:

- autumn,
- falling leaves,
- Halloween (October 31).

The expression **May and December** metaphorically refers to a marriage between a very young woman and a significantly older man.

Sunday occupies a special place in British culture. Traditionally, it is associated with:

- church attendance;
- reading large Sunday newspapers;
- family gatherings;
- traditional Sunday lunches consisting of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, gravy, roast potatoes, vegetables, and dessert.

Thus, Sunday functions as an important symbol of family unity and cultural continuity.

In Russian culture, certain months are linked to major historical events:

- **October** evokes the October Revolution of 1917;
- **February** is associated with the February Revolution;
- **May** recalls both Victory Day (9 May) and International Workers' Day (1 May).

These associations demonstrate how historical memory becomes embedded in linguistic consciousness.

In Germany, **November** is associated with several major historical events, including:

- the proclamation of the Weimar Republic;
- Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass) in 1938, when synagogues were destroyed and anti-Jewish violence spread across Nazi Germany.

As a result, November occupies a particularly significant place in German collective memory.

For the French, **July** immediately evokes the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, one of the most important events in French history.

In Bavaria, **October** is inseparably associated with **Oktoberfest**, one of the largest and most famous festivals in the world.

Ideologemes and Cultural Connotations

Ideologically charged vocabulary frequently carries strong linguocultural associations.

For many British and American speakers, words such as:

- **communism**
- **communist**
- **socialist**
- **Labour Party**
- **feminism**

may evoke emotional reactions and ideological evaluations that extend beyond their dictionary definitions. Similarly, Russian terms such as **perestroika** and **glasnost** possess powerful historical and cultural connotations.

Abstract Concepts and Historical Periods

Certain abstract expressions have become culturally significant through historical development.

Examples include:

- **sixty-four-thousand-dollar question** – an extremely difficult or tricky question;
- **four-letter word** – an obscene or offensive word.

These expressions reflect cultural values and patterns of social communication.

Historical periods themselves often function as cultural symbols.

The English expression **the Sixties** refers not merely to the decade of the 1960s but also to a period of profound social transformation characterized by youth rebellion, new musical styles, changing fashions, sexual liberation, and experimentation with alternative lifestyles.

Similarly, **the Middle Ages** evoke associations with Christianity, monasticism, crusades, feudalism, and particular forms of social organization.

Cultural Symbolism of the Black Cat

The same symbol may acquire radically different meanings across cultures.

In Russian culture, a black cat crossing one's path is traditionally considered a sign of misfortune.

In English culture, however, a black cat is often regarded as a symbol of good luck. English folk beliefs associate good fortune with:

- finding a four-leaf clover,
- seeing two magpies together,
- encountering a black cat crossing one's path.

In French culture, by contrast, black cats are associated with bad luck. During the Middle Ages, they were frequently linked with witchcraft and were often persecuted alongside individuals accused of sorcery. French folklore contains numerous expressions warning against crossing paths with a black cat. These examples demonstrate how the same image may acquire entirely different symbolic interpretations in different linguocultural communities.

Conclusion

The analysis of culturally marked lexical units demonstrates that linguocultural information is distributed unevenly across the lexical system. The overwhelming majority of such units are nouns, while verbs, adjectives, adverbs, phraseological units, and sentence-like expressions occur considerably less frequently.

The study further confirms that linguoculturology, as a modern linguistic paradigm, does not possess rigid boundaries. In many cases, it is difficult to distinguish strictly linguocultural

phenomena from broader ethnocultural phenomena. Particularly significant in this respect are onomastic units, including anthroponyms, toponyms, mythonyms, and other proper names that preserve collective cultural memory and encode culturally significant knowledge within language.

Thus, linguocultural analysis of lexical units provides valuable insights into the worldview, values, historical experience, and cultural identity of linguistic communities. Modern lexicography should therefore incorporate not only denotative meanings but also culturally specific information that enables a deeper understanding of language as a reflection of culture.

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