



REPRESENTING CULTURE THROUGH DICTIONARIES: MACRO AND MICROSTRUCTURAL ANALYSES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how general English and Uzbek dictionaries represent culture through macro structural and microstructural features. Drawing on cultural linguistics and lexicographic theory, the research demonstrates that dictionaries are culturally embedded artifacts rather than neutral repositories of meanings. Using a comparative, descriptive methodology, the analysis investigates headword selection, organizational principles, definitions, examples, usage labels, and explanatory notes in major English and Uzbek monolingual, bilingual and learner's dictionaries. The results show that cultural representation is shaped by historical context, ideological priorities and differing lexicographic traditions. English dictionaries tend to provide more systematic coverage of culture-specific items, supported by rich corpus resources, whereas Uzbek dictionaries reveal gaps in recording contemporary cultural and technological terms. Microstructural elements-especially examples, labels and cultural notes-play a crucial role in conveying cultural nuance. The study further highlights the challenges of translating culture-bound terms and necessity for lexicographers to act as cultural mediators. Overall, the findings underscore the need for integrated macro and microstructural strategies to ensure culturally informed lexicography in both languages.

ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ КУЛЬТУРЫ ЧЕРЕЗ СЛОВАРИ: МАКРО И МИКРОСТРУКТУРНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ

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ABSTRACT

Данное исследование рассматривает, как общие английские и узбекские словари репрезентируют культуру через макроструктурные и микроструктурные особенности. Опираясь на культурную лингвистику и лексикографическую теорию, исследование демонстрирует, что словари являются культурно обусловленными артефактами, а не нейтральными хранилищами значений. Используя сравнительную описательную методологию, анализ изучает отбор заглавных слов, организационные принципы, дефиниции, примеры, стилистические пометы и пояснительные примечания в основных английских и узбекских одноязычных, двуязычных и учебных словарях. Результаты показывают, что культурная репрезентация формируется историческим контекстом, идеологическими приоритетами и различными лексикографическими традициями. Английские словари, как правило, обеспечивают более систематический охват культурно-специфических единиц, опираясь на богатые корпусные ресурсы, тогда как узбекские словари обнаруживают пробелы в фиксации современных культурных и технологических терминов. Микроструктурные элементы — особенно примеры, пометы и культурные примечания — играют ключевую роль в передаче культурных нюансов. Исследование также подчеркивает трудности перевода культурно обусловленных терминов и необходимость для лексикографов выступать в роли культурных посредников. В целом, результаты подчеркивают необходимость интегрированных макро- и микроструктурных стратегий для обеспечения культурно-ориентированной лексикографии на обоих языках.



MADANIYATNING LUG'ATLAR VOSITASIDA IFODALANISHI: MAKRO VA MIKROSTRUKTURAVIY TAHLIL

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ABSTRACT

Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz va o'zbek lug'atlari madaniyatni makrostrukturaviy va mikrostrukturaviy xususiyatlari orqali aks ettirishini tadqiq qiladi. Madaniy lingvistika va leksikografik nazariyalarga asoslanib, lug'atlarning neytral ma'no omborlari emas, balki madaniy jihatdan shakllantirilgan madaniy meros ekanligini ko'rsatadi. Qiyosiy-tavsifiy metodologiyadan foydalangan holda, tahlilda asosiy ingliz va o'zbek bir tilli, ikki tilli va o'quv lug'atlaridagi, bosh so'zlarini tanlash, tashkiliy tamoyillar, ta'riflar, misollar, uslubiy belgilar va izohlar o'rganildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, madaniy tasvir tarixiy kontekst, mafkuraviy ustuvorliklar va turli leksikografik an'analar tomonidan shakllantiriladi. Ingliz lug'atlari boy korpus resurslariga tayanib, madaniyatga xos birliklarni ancha tizimli qamrab oladi, o'zbek lug'atlarida esa zamonaviy, madaniy va texnologik atamalarni qayd etishda bo'shliqlar mavjudligi aniqlandi. Mikrostrukturaviy elementlar-ayniqsa misollar, belgilar va madaniy izohlar madaniy ma'lumotlarni yetkazida muhim rol o'ynaydi. Tadqiqot shuningdek, madaniyatga bog'liq atamalarni tarjima qilish qiyinchiliklarini va leksikograflarning madaniyat vositachisi sifatida harakat qilishi zarurligini ta'kidlaydi. Natijalar ikkala tilda ham madaniy jihatdan asoslangan leksikografiyani ta'minlash uchun integratsiyalashgan makro va mikrostrukturaviy strategiyalar zarurligini ta'kidlaydi.

Introduction. Dictionaries are not value-neutral repositories. They both reflect and shape culture in which they produced. Dictionaries have long been viewed as more than collections of word meaning. They are cultural artefacts that mirror the societies and eras



that produce them¹. The selection of headwords, the examples chosen, and even the labels or usage notes in a dictionary reflect cultural and ideological perspectives of their time.

In broad terms, two levels of dictionary structure play key roles in representing culture. Macrostructure refers to the overall design and content selection of a dictionary-what entries are included and how they are organized. This could encompass whether the dictionary is arranged alphabetically or thematically, the inclusion of encyclopedic appendices or thematic lists and decisions about including proper names or culture-specific items. Microstructure, on the other hand, refers to the internal structure of each entry-the definition wording, example sentences, etymologies, usage labels, illustrations and any notes or commentary that accompany the headword². Both levels offer opportunities for cultural representation. For example, at the macro structural level, a bilingual dictionary might include many culture-bound words and at the microstructural level, it might provide detailed explanations or context for such terms.

Understanding how culture is embedded in dictionaries is important for several reasons. Dictionaries often serve as cross-cultural bridges, especially bilingual and learner's dictionaries used by language learners and translators. Including cultural information can help users grasp not just the linguistic translation of a word but its cultural connotations and proper usage contexts³. From the perspective of cultural linguistics, language and culture are intertwined; meaning of words often cannot be fully understood without cultural context. General-purpose dictionaries (both monolingual and bilingual) thus face the challenge of representing this context within the constraints of lexicographic conventions.

This paper focuses on how general dictionaries across languages represent culture through macro and microstructural means, with a special emphasis on comparing English and Uzbek lexicographic practices. English lexicography has a century-old tradition, including comprehensive works like the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and a widely used learner's dictionaries (e.g. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Cambridge English Dictionary) which have developed various strategies to mark cultural information. Uzbek lexicography, while also historically rich, is less internationally known. It provides an illuminating contrast as it has had to adapt different scripts (Arabic, Cyrillic, Latin) and cultural paradigms. By examining English and Uzbek dictionaries side by side, we can see how two languages-one a global lingua franca, the other the national language of Uzbekistan-handle the interplay of language and culture in their dictionaries.

By the 21st century, numerous scholars have explicitly called for enhancing cultural information in dictionaries. One line of research has examined how learner's dictionaries handle cultural content. Learner's dictionaries (monolingual dictionaries written for those learning the language as a foreign language) traditionally focused on high-frequency core vocabulary and straightforward definitions. The lexicographic literature

¹ T.Tasovac, A.Salgado, R.Costa "Introduction to dictionaries" (training module)2021

<https://campus.dariah.eu/resources/hosted/introduction-to-dictionaries>

² Eman Mahmood Mohamed Elesawy "The Functionality of Dictionaries of Quotations as Lexicographic and Cultural Repertoires" Journal of the Faculty of Al-Alsun Vol-4, Issue-2 December 2024 P-226

³ Mei Xue "Representing the Cultural Dimension of Meaning in Learner's Dictionaries-from the Perspective of Chinese EFL Learner's in L2 Reception" Lexicos Journals.as.za 2017 P-582-584



distinguishes between macro structural and microstructural strategies for incorporating culture. On the macro structural side, one key question is which entries include. Monolingual general dictionaries for native speakers often exclude proper nouns unless they have become lexicalized, yet those proper names can carry significant cultural weight.

Methods. This study employed a comparative, descriptive research design, combining literature-based analysis with case study of specific dictionaries. The goal was to analyze how cultural information is represented in both English and Uzbek general dictionaries through their macro structural and microstructural features. This research proceeded in several steps: literature survey, selections of dictionaries, analytical framework, case studies and analysis procedure. First a comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather theoretical frameworks, past findings and criteria relevant to cultural representation in dictionaries.

We selected a set of representative dictionaries for analysis, focusing on English and Uzbek including monolingual general dictionary (*Oxford English Dictionary-online edition*), a monolingual learner's dictionary (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th edition-online*), and bilingual dictionary (*English-Uzbek bilingual dictionary*). For Uzbek, we examined the comprehensive monolingual explanatory dictionary of Uzbek (*O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati, 2006th edition*) and a popular Uzbek-English Dictionary.

For some macro structural and microstructural elements, a developed framework was examined. We analyzed entry selection, organization, front-back matters, definition text, example sentences, usage labels, etymology and encyclopedic info. Specific entries that are likely to reveal cultural representation were chosen. For each selected entry and dictionary, data was collected by reading the entry (and related notes) and recording observations according to the analytical categories. The collected data was then qualitatively analyzed. We compared English and Uzbek approaches, dictionary formats, noting patterns or notable differences. To ensure our interpretations were sound, we cross-checked some entries with external sources. For example, if a dictionary gave a minimal definition of a cultural term, we checked an encyclopedia or another dictionary to confirm what cultural information might have been left out.

The methodology, being largely qualitative and comparative, does not involve statistical analysis but rather a content analysis approach. The limitation is that only a subset of dictionaries and entries could be analyzed, given the vast number of possible words,

Results. Dictionary macro structure reflects culture primarily through headword choice. English general dictionaries consistently include culturally significant items such as *Guy Fawkes Night* or *White Christmas*⁴, often with historical notes. Uzbek dictionaries likewise register core cultural terms like *Navruz*⁵ or *makhalla*. Bilingual dictionaries must cover both cultures. For example, *Thanksgiving* is explained for Uzbek users, while *Kurash* is introduced to English readers. Prior research stresses that systematic inclusion of culture-specific items is essential for bilingual dictionaries. English monolingual

⁴ Cambridge Dictionary Online (n.d.) *White Christmas* <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/white-christmas>

⁵ "O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati "N" O'zbekiston Milliy Ensiklopediyasi Toshkent P-8



dictionaries provide nearly exhaustive cultural coverage, while Uzbek dictionaries sometimes lag behind in registering new cultural and technological terms (*meme, blog*).

Most general dictionaries on both languages use alphabetical ordering. However, English dictionaries, such as OALD, often include culturally oriented appendixes (e.g. *nationalities, historical figures, measurement systems*). Uzbek dictionaries rarely feature such additions, though one Uzbek-English dictionary contained a short glossary of untranslatable cultural terms. The blurred boundary between dictionaries and encyclopedias is especially evident in digital formats, where entries often hyperlink to encyclopedic explanations. Modern English dictionaries incorporate numerous loanwords (*taekwondo, hijab*) as part of the globalized English lexicon, frequently providing cultural origin notes. Uzbek lexicography shows similar tendencies: foreign terms such as *terminal* are included due to widespread usage. Inconsistent standardization in Uzbek terminology leads to heavy borrowing or lengthy explanations for culturally foreign concepts.

What dictionaries omit also reflect cultural and ideological priorities. Older English Dictionaries sometimes excluded culturally basic items (e.g. baseball), while Uzbek dictionaries from the 2000s include Soviet-era terminology but lack contemporary youth slang or recent borrowings. Political or religious sensitivity also shapes inclusion: post-Soviet Uzbek dictionaries began adding Islamic terms that were marginalized in earlier eras. These patterns confirm that macrostructure is influenced by cultural, historical and ideological contexts.

Not all dictionaries consistently provide rich cultural context in definitions. Learner's dictionaries, constrained by simplicity, sometimes strip definitions to basics. Cambridge Learner's Dictionary, for example, defines *Thanksgiving* simply as "an annual holiday in the US in November when families have a large meal" - which is a start but omits historical or cultural nuances. In contrast, the OED (historical dictionary) entry for Thanksgiving delves into historical usage and mentions specific cultural practices (Church services)⁶. The difference illustrates varying purposes: learner's dictionaries prioritize immediate comprehension, whereas encyclopedic dictionaries record cultural depth. Our analysis suggests that there is room even in learner's dictionaries to add a bit more context without overwhelming the user.

Example sentences in dictionaries often provide a glimpse of real-life usage. We observed that many dictionaries use neutral, generic contexts for examples, but some cleverly use examples to impart cultural information. For instance, the OELD's entry for *rice* includes an examples about *a traditional Uzbek plov (pilaf) cooked with rice*, thus sneaking in a cultural reference while showing usage. This might be a coincidence or a nod to cultural diversity. The Uzbek explanatory dictionary tended to give examples from classic Uzbek literature or common sayings, which inherently carry cultural context. For example, for the word *mehmon*⁷ (guest), an example proverb was given: *Mexmon otangdan ulug'* (a guest is greater than your father), which is saying that reflects the

⁶ Oxford Learner's Dictionary Online (n.d) *Thanksgiving*

<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/thanksgiving?q=thanksgiving>

⁷ "O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati "M" O'zbekiston Milliy Ensiklopediyasi Toshkent P-586



cultural importance of hospitality. A reader glean meaning from the example learns not just the word but its cultural connotation (guests are to be highly respected). Including proverbs or idiomatic usage as examples is a powerful microstructural way to encode culture, It confirms that, examples can convey cultural, semantic and translational references.

Many dictionaries employ usage labels like formal, informal, slang, humorous, offensive, etc., which often imply cultural context about appropriateness and social settings. We noted that English dictionaries are quite thorough with registers and regional labels (e.g. *chiefly US, informal*). These labels help users navigate cultural variation within the language. For example, the label “Australian informal” might accompany a word like *barbie* (for barbeque) to signal it’s specific to Australian English culture. Uzbek dictionaries also sometimes label words, especially loanwords or dialect words, indication *archaic, regional or from Russian*, etc.

Microstructural features in dictionaries-definitions, examples, notes, labels and multimedia-play a crucial role in representing culture. English and Uzbek dictionaries both show evidence of microstructural adaptation to convey cultural nuances, though the extent and style differ. A key finding is that representing culture effectively often means breaking the traditional mold of terse dictionary definitions and including additional explanatory material. This is sometimes done within definitions, sometimes as separate notes or examples. Crucially, the integration of macro and microstructure is needed including a culture-bound words (macro structure) but failing to explain it (microstructure) would not serve users, and explaining cultural concepts richly is possible if those concepts were chosen to be included as entries. The results above illustrate how English and Uzbek dictionaries attempt this balance. The discussion about implications of these findings and how dictionary-makers can further improve cultural representation will follow.

Discussion. The analysis of cultural representation in dictionary structures reveals several important themes and implications, which resonate with and extend the prior research in lexicography and cultural linguistics. One overarching insight is the necessity of integrating macro and microstructural approaches to effectively represent culture. As our must also explain them in a user-friendly way. English lexicography benefits from a long tradition and abundant resources (corpora, scholarly expertise, commercial backing). As such, major English dictionaries often have the luxury of including encyclopedic details and updating frequently. Uzbek lexicography, while historically rooted in efforts like medieval dictionaries or Soviet-era Russian-Uzbek dictionaries, is still developing modern large-scale works (especially monolingual one).

The historical reference shows that cultural knowledge has long been essential in lexicography. As communication mediators, lexicographers must bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, conveying nuanced meanings with sensitivity to diverse sociocultural perspectives. Relying on intercultural competence, they help users understand culture-bound items by activating prior knowledge, adapting language and offering clear



explanations. These strategies ensure effective communication across cultures⁸. Lexicography has a crucial but often under-acknowledged intercultural dimension. Lexicographers are cultural mediators rather than mere data compilers, facilitating communication across languages and cultures by making strategic choices to simplify, adapt and contextualize information for users with varying cultural competence. The emphasis on emotional intelligence and user-oriented explanation reflects modern lexicography's shift toward culturally informed definitions and contextual guidance.

Alisherova and Sodikova explains the problematic nature of presenting culture-bound terms in dictionaries as follows: The creation of thematic dictionaries in English and Uzbek presents several challenges due to the linguistic, cultural and structural differences between the two languages. One of the primary difficulties lies in translating culture-bound terms, as they do not always have exact equivalents. For instance, English legal and business terms such as plea bargain or stock option lack direct correspondences in Uzbek, thus requiring detailed explanations. Conversely, Uzbek terms such as mahalla (a traditional neighborhood community) may not have precise equivalents in English⁹. Thematic dictionary creation must go beyond literal translation and incorporate cultural explanation, contextual detail and sometimes encyclopedic description to preserve meaning. It underscores the need for lexicographers to be not only bilingual but also bicultural, capable of mediating between two cultural words.

National-cultural units (NCU) are linguistically encoded elements that reflect the unique realities, traditions and value systems of specific community. Functioning as lexical markers of a national worldview, they preserve cultural heritage within the language. NCU typically includes:

- Realia (culture-specific objects and phenomena);
- Phraseological units (Idioms shaped by cultural-historical experience);
- Onomastic items (Proper names with cultural significance);
- Ethnographic terms.

Their defining feature is strong cultural marks, which makes precise translation difficult without loss of national specificity. Current linguistic classifications distinguish NCU:

-By domain (everyday realia, socio-political realia, religious realia, historical realia, cultural-artistic realia);

-By form (lexical items, phraseological expressions, symbolic images, lexicosemantic groups);

-By function (Nominative, expressive, symbolic)¹⁰. While the categorization of NCU appears systematic, these categories frequently intersect in practice—a complexity the text fails to examine. A particularly important insight is the notion of cultural marks and the inherent difficulty of translating such units without losing cultural nuance. This point

⁸ Martina Nied Cursio “Lexicography, Culture and Mediation. Or why a good lexicographer must also be a good culture mediator” *Lexicos*, 33(2) 2023 P-104-105

⁹ Sh.A.Alisherova, S.A.Sodiqova “The Lexicographic Principles for Creating Thematic Dictionaries in English and Uzbek Languages” *International Journal of Science and Technology Issue-5*, 2025 P-134

¹⁰ Z.X.Nakimova “Лексикографическое представление национально-культурных единиц” *Qo'qon DPI (8) 2025 P-885-884*



highlights why NCU is central to translation studies: they require strategies behind simple lexical equivalence, often involving explanation, cultural commentary or adaptation.

Conclusion. This research contributes to the field by systematically comparing two linguistic contexts and highlighting best practices and gaps. It underscores that every aspect of dictionary-making from deciding which words to include to how to phrase a definition-has a cultural dimension. The findings and recommendations here have practical implications for lexicographers working on new dictionaries or revising existing ones, especially in bilingual or learner's contexts. They also have pedagogical implications: teachers and learners can use culturally rich dictionaries as tools for cultural learning, not just language learning.

As languages evolve and cultures interact more closely in our globalized world, dictionaries will continue to play a vital role in documenting and transmitting cultural knowledge. The challenge and opportunity for lexicography is to embrace this role fully-developing dictionary macro structure that capture the breadth of a culture's lexicon, and microstructure that convey the depth of each concept's cultural meaning. The case of English and Uzbek shows that while languages and contexts differ, the goal of a culturally informed dictionary is universal. With ongoing innovation and sensitivity to cultural detail, dictionaries will remain indispensable guides not only to words, but to the worlds whose words inhabit.

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