



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VOCABULARY RELATED TO NATIONAL CUSTOMS

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Abstract. This article presents a comparative study of lexical units related to the national customs of different peoples. The research examines terms associated with ceremonies, festivals, clothing, food, and cultural practices as key indicators reflecting the intrinsic connection between language and culture. Words related to customs in English, Uzbek, Russian, and Japanese are compared from semantic, cultural, and translational perspectives, highlighting both universal and unique features. The findings reveal that vocabulary connected to national customs not only preserves the historical and cultural memory of nations but also plays an important role in intercultural communication.

Keywords: national customs, vocabulary, cultural linguistics, comparative analysis, intercultural communication

Introduction

Language and culture are deeply intertwined, with each nation’s historical memory, customs, and worldview manifested in linguistic units, particularly in vocabulary. National customs represent a system of values transmitted from generation to generation through rituals, festivals, clothing, cuisine, and lifestyle elements. Therefore, studying vocabulary associated with such customs is significant not only for linguistics but also for cultural studies and translation studies.

Words related to national customs are not merely terms; they function as symbolic markers preserving the cultural memory of a people. For example, in Uzbek, Navro‘z signifies not only the “New Year” but also symbolizes renewal, fertility, friendship, and the awakening of nature. The English Thanksgiving carries both religious and historical roots, embodying ideas of family unity and gratitude. The Japanese Hanami, though literally referring to viewing flowers in spring, in fact reflects a cultural mentality that values the beauty of nature and social harmony. The Russian Maslenitsa is associated with rituals marking the transition from winter to summer, symbolizing the fusion of Orthodox traditions with ancient Slavic customs. Recent studies in cultural linguistics and ethno-linguistics have emphasized the importance of vocabulary related to customs. However, comparative research addressing the lexicon of different nations remains insufficient. In particular, analyzing together the perspectives of Central Asian, Western, Slavic, and East Asian cultures has both scholarly and practical significance. In this regard, the present study focuses on the comparative analysis of lexical units related to national customs in English, Uzbek, Russian, and Japanese. The relevance of the study lies in the fact that such an analysis: Demonstrates how customs are linguistically



expressed in each culture. Expands opportunities for intercultural communication by identifying similarities and differences.

Provides a theoretical foundation for overcoming challenges in translation. Thus, studying the vocabulary of national customs should be considered an important scholarly task for preserving cultural heritage, explaining it adequately to other nations, and organizing effective intercultural communication in a global context.

Literature Review; The study of language and culture interrelations has long been a pressing issue in linguistics. Anthropological and sociolinguistic approaches, in particular, serve as crucial theoretical bases for examining the vocabulary of national customs E. Sapir interpreted language as a “cultural product,” emphasizing that it embodies a people’s lifestyle, customs, and worldview. For Sapir, language is a social phenomenon reflecting lived experience, with the lexicon of national customs being one of its most evident manifestations. B. Whorf through his linguistic relativity hypothesis, argued that linguistic categories shape human perception of the world. This approach provides a methodological basis for analyzing how terms related to customs reflect collective mentality.

A Wierzbic (1997), ¹in her theory of “cultural key words,” demonstrated that some lexical items lack equivalents in other languages and can only be explained through cultural commentary. For example, translating Navro‘z simply as “New Year” or Hanami as “flower viewing” is insufficient without accounting for their symbolic, historical, and social meanings. In recent years, cultural linguistics has expanded significantly. F. Sharifian (2017) ²stressed the importance of studying language and culture together, developing the concept of “cultural schemas” embedded in linguistic expressions. This framework enables a contextual understanding of vocabulary related to customs in intercultural communication.

In Uzbek linguistics, researchers have also paid attention to this area. Karimov analyzed terms connected with Uzbek national festivals from semantic and ethnolinguistic perspectives, revealing their role in preserving cultural memory and values. Inoyatova examined the integration of language and customs, highlighting the significance of such vocabulary in the education of younger generations. Japanese linguists have widely studied seasonal customs-related vocabulary. For instance, Tanaka explained Hanami and Obon not only as ceremonial words but also as symbolic expressions of the Japanese people’s relationship with nature. Similarly, Russian linguists have studied the lexical layer associated with Orthodox traditions and Slavic rituals, noting that words such as Maslenitsa and Paskha reflect core cultural and religious values. In English, Thanksgiving and Christmas represent national-historical experiences and Anglo-American cultural identity. In summary, the existing literature demonstrates that vocabulary connected with national customs plays a significant role in expressing cultural identity. However, most studies remain limited to a

¹ A Wierzbicka in her theory of “cultural key words,” (1997)

² F. Sharifian stressed the importance of studying language and culture together, developing the concept of “cultural schemas” embedded in linguistic expressions (2017).



single language or cultural context. Thus, comparative research covering Uzbek, Russian, English, and Japanese lexicons is particularly timely.

Relevance, Aim, and Objectives

Relevance; In the era of globalization, effective intercultural communication depends on a deep understanding of the unity of language and culture. Lexical units relating to customs, ceremonies, and festivals reflect historical memory, values, and national distinctiveness. Since many of these words cannot be directly translated and require cultural commentary, studying them comparatively is relevant not only for linguistics but also for cultural studies, translation studies, and education. This topic is significant for enhancing intercultural communication, preserving national values, and presenting them appropriately on the global stage.

Aim; The primary aim of the study is to conduct a comparative analysis of vocabulary related to national customs in English, Uzbek, Russian, and Japanese, to identify their universal and unique features, and to highlight their significance in intercultural communication. Objectives to achieve this aim, the following objectives were set: To describe the meaning of lexical units related to national customs and classify them into semantic fields. To collect and analyze core vocabulary of customs in Uzbek, Russian, English, and Japanese. To compare selected terms in terms of equivalence and identify untranslatable items. To examine the historical, religious, and symbolic connotations of such vocabulary. To determine similarities and differences through comparative analysis and assess their role in intercultural communication. To provide recommendations for translation and educational practices based on the findings.

Methodology This research is based on comparative Linguistics and cultural linguistics approaches. The methodological process included several stages: **Data Collection:** Sources included dictionaries of Uzbek, Russian, English, and Japanese, ethnographic literature, academic works on national festivals and ceremonies, and folklore materials. Vocabulary items were collected relating directly to customs, such as festival names (Navro‘z, Maslenitsa, Hanami, Thanksgiving), ceremonial terms (sumalak, mocha, turkey, bliny), clothing (chapan, sarafan, kimono), as well as greetings and ritual expressions.

Languages and Object of Study:

Uzbek - terms reflecting the traditions of Central Asia.

Russian - terms connected with Orthodox rituals and Slavic customs.

English - vocabulary related to Western, particularly religious and family-oriented festivals.

Japanese - terms reflecting seasonal rituals and traditional culture.

Criteria of Analysis:

Classification into semantic fields: festivals, foods, clothing, greetings.

Equivalence analysis: assessing whether direct translation into other languages is possible.

Cultural connotations: analyzing historical, religious, symbolic, and social



meanings.

Methods: Comparative analysis: comparing lexical units across the four languages to reveal similarities and differences. Semantic analysis: explaining primary and secondary meanings. Translation analysis: identifying untranslatable terms and examining cultural approaches to their explanation. Limitations:

The study is limited to lexical units; phonetic, morphological, or syntactic aspects were not included. The analysis covers four major cultural areas (Central Asia, Slavic, Western, East Asian), excluding others.

Results and Discussion

Common Features In all four languages, vocabulary related to customs can be classified into several semantic fields: Festivals: Navro‘z (Uzbek), Maslenitsa (Russian), Thanksgiving (English), Hanami (Japanese). Foods: sumalak, (Uzbek), bliny (Russian), turkey (English), mocha (Japanese) Clothing: chapan (Uzbek), sarafan (Russian), kilt (English, regional), kimono (Japanese). Greetings: Navro‘z muborak! (Uzbek), Счастливого Рождества, (Russian), Merry Christmas! (English). Akemashit omedetou, gozaimasu (Japanese). This classification shows that while the function of expressing customs is universal, the lexical realizations are unique to each culture. **Distinctive Features** **Untranslatability:** Terms such as sumalak, Hanami, or Thanksgiving cannot be directly translated; they require explanatory commentary. **Religious Basis:** Russian Paskha is tied to Orthodox Christianity, while English Thanksgiving stems from Protestant traditions. Uzbek Navro‘z has Zoroastrian roots but is now celebrated as a secular holiday. **Symbolic Meaning:** The Japanese kimono is not only a garment but also a national symbol; the Uzbek chapan serves as both clothing and a sign of respect. **Role in Intercultural Communication**

Translating vocabulary related to customs often fails to fully convey its meaning. For instance, rendering Navro‘z simply as “New Year” does not capture its agricultural, seasonal, and spiritual symbolism. Therefore, cultural commentary is necessary, underscoring the importance of cultural linguistics in intercultural dialogue.

Conclusion

Vocabulary related to national customs constitutes a vital layer of language that reflects a nation’s historical memory, values, and culture. A comparative analysis of Uzbek, Russian, English, and Japanese demonstrates that while such vocabulary shares common semantic fields, its cultural connotations remain unique to each people. The findings suggest that translation, language teaching, and intercultural communication require cultural sensitivity when dealing with such terms. Future research should expand to include more languages and traditions, thereby enriching the field of cultural linguistics and contributing to mutual understanding in a globalized world.

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