RESEARCH ARTICLE

Lexical and Phraseological Means of Conceptual Expression in The Uzbek Language

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Abstract

This article examines the role of lexical and phraseological means in the expression of concepts in the Uzbek language. In contemporary linguistics, the concept is understood as a complex cognitive and cultural unit that reflects the interaction of language, thought, and national worldview. The relevance of the study is determined by the growing interest in cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, and the semantic mechanisms through which language verbalizes culturally significant knowledge. The purpose of the article is to identify the specific functions of lexical and phraseological units in representing concepts in Uzbek and to determine their semantic, expressive, and cultural potential. The research is based on descriptive, semantic, comparative, contextual, and linguocultural methods. The analysis demonstrates that lexical units serve as primary nominative means of conceptual expression, while phraseological units deepen, intensify, evaluate, and culturally specify conceptual content. In Uzbek, concepts such as "ko'ngil," "or," "vatan," "mehnat," "mehr," and "sabr" are represented not only through direct lexical nomination but also through stable figurative expressions that reveal national mentality and value orientations. The findings show that conceptual expression in Uzbek is characterized by the interaction of denotative and connotative meanings, the unity of nominative and evaluative functions, and the important role of phraseological imagery in preserving collective cultural memory. The article concludes that the study of lexical and phraseological means of conceptual expression contributes to a deeper understanding of the Uzbek linguistic worldview and opens new prospects for research in semantics, phraseology, lexicography, cognitive linguistics, and language teaching methodology.

KEYWORDS

Concept, conceptual expression, Uzbek language, lexical means, phraseological means, cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, semantics, national worldview, phraseology.

INTRODUCTION

Language does not merely name objects and phenomena of reality; it also structures, stores, and transmits culturally significant knowledge about the world. In this sense, language becomes one of the main instruments through which collective experience is conceptualized. The category of concept occupies a central place in cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology because it links linguistic form with mental content and cultural interpretation. A concept is not only an abstract mental unit but also a culturally conditioned semantic structure represented through words, phraseological units,

metaphors, symbols, and textual associations.

In the Uzbek language, conceptual expression is especially rich due to the interaction of lexical and phraseological means. Lexical units provide direct and relatively stable nomination of concepts, while phraseological units reflect figurative, evaluative, emotional, and nationally marked ways of understanding reality. This dual mechanism is particularly visible in the representation of ethically and culturally significant concepts that occupy an important place in Uzbek linguistic consciousness. Such concepts are verbalized through everyday vocabulary, poetic images, stable combinations, and traditional expressions that have developed over many generations.

The study of conceptual expression in Uzbek is relevant for several reasons. First, it helps clarify how language reflects national mentality and cultural values. Second, it allows scholars to identify the specific semantic mechanisms through which conceptual content is organized. Third, it contributes to the broader development of Uzbek cognitive linguistics, a field that increasingly requires systematic analysis of language as a bearer of conceptual structures. Finally, the investigation of conceptual expression has practical significance for lexicography, literary analysis, intercultural communication, and language teaching.

Despite the growing number of studies devoted to concepts, phraseology, and lexical semantics, the interaction between lexical and phraseological means in conceptual representation remains insufficiently systematized in relation to the Uzbek language. Most concepts are not expressed by isolated lexical items alone. Their semantic content unfolds through a network of nominative units, figurative expressions, connotative shades, and discourse realizations. Therefore, the central aim of this article is to examine lexical and phraseological means of conceptual expression in the Uzbek language and to determine how they function together in verbalizing culturally significant conceptual content.

The material for the research includes lexical and phraseological units of the modern Uzbek literary language, examples from explanatory and phraseological dictionaries, samples from Uzbek художественная литература, folklore expressions, and linguistic works on semantics, phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and linguoculturology. Particular attention was paid to concepts that play an important role in the Uzbek cultural worldview and are richly represented in everyday and literary language.

The study is based on a descriptive-analytical approach. The descriptive method was used to identify lexical and phraseological means related to conceptual expression and to characterize their semantic functions. Semantic analysis made it possible to examine denotative, connotative, figurative, and evaluative components in lexical and phraseological representation. The contextual method was applied to reveal how conceptual units function in actual discourse and how their meanings are specified or transformed in different speech situations. Comparative analysis was used to distinguish the nominative role of lexical units from the figurative and culturally intensified role of phraseological units. Elements of linguocultural interpretation were included in order to explain the national-cultural content embedded in verbalized concepts.

The theoretical basis of the article rests on the understanding that concepts are mental-cultural formations represented in language through various verbal means. Lexical units are treated as basic nominative forms of conceptualization, while phraseological units are regarded as stable figurative formations that enrich concepts with imagery, evaluation, and national specificity. This methodological approach allows conceptual expression to be viewed as a dynamic interaction between direct naming and figurative-cultural interpretation.

RESULTS

The analysis of the Uzbek linguistic material shows that conceptual expression in the language is realized through a close interaction between lexical and phraseological means. Lexical units represent the primary level of conceptual nomination. They directly identify concepts and provide the basic semantic framework within which further cognitive and cultural associations develop. For example, concepts such as mehr, sabr, vatan, or, ko'ngil, and mehnat are first verbalized through separate lexical units that denote love, patience, homeland, honor, heart-soul, and labor respectively. These lexical units form the semantic core of corresponding concepts and allow them to function as recognizable cultural categories in the language system.

At the same time, lexical nomination alone does not exhaust conceptual content. A concept, especially in a culturally rich language such as Uzbek, usually extends beyond dictionary meaning. It absorbs emotional associations, value judgments, ethical norms, and figurative representations accumulated in collective consciousness. Phraseological units become

especially important at this stage because they reveal the inner semantic and cultural depth of concepts. Through phraseology, a concept is not simply named but interpreted, emotionally colored, and embedded into the national worldview.

One of the clearest examples of this interaction is the concept ko'ngil. In Uzbek, this word cannot be reduced to a simple equivalent such as "heart" or "mood." Its conceptual structure includes emotional sensitivity, inner intention, spiritual state, interpersonal attitude, and moral delicacy. Lexical expressions with ko'ngil already show a broad semantic range, but phraseological units make this concept especially rich and nuanced. Expressions such as ko'ngli joyiga tushmoq, ko'nglidan o'tkazmoq, ko'ngli cho'kmoq, ko'ngliga tugmoq, and ko'ngli oq verbalize different emotional, ethical, and psychological states. These phraseological formations demonstrate that the concept is represented not as a static lexical meaning but as a living semantic field structured by national perception.

Another important example is the concept or. In Uzbek culture, this concept is deeply connected with honor, dignity, shame, self-respect, and moral responsibility before family and society. The lexical unit itself denotes a culturally significant ethical category, but phraseological expressions intensify and clarify its functional meaning in speech. Through lexical means, the concept is named as a moral value, while through phraseological means it is presented as a lived cultural norm, often connected with evaluation and behavioral expectation. The phraseological environment surrounding such a concept reveals how the Uzbek language encodes social ethics and collective forms of emotional regulation.

The concept vatan also illustrates the complementary roles of lexical and phraseological means. Lexically, vatan names homeland and functions as an important socio-cultural notion in public discourse, education, literature, and everyday speech. However, phraseological and metaphorical expressions surrounding this concept make it emotionally and axiologically stronger. In literary and public discourse, homeland is conceptualized not only as territory or place of birth but as a sacred space associated with duty, memory, sacrifice, belonging, and identity. Phraseological usage helps transform lexical nomination into a culturally elevated image. Thus, conceptual expression involves both direct denotation and symbolic-cultural enrichment.

The results also show that lexical means are more often

associated with semantic precision and systematization, whereas phraseological means are linked with imagery and evaluative expansion. Lexical units serve as semantic anchors; they make the concept identifiable, nameable, and categorizable. Phraseological units, in contrast, activate associative networks and provide access to the emotional and cultural dimensions of conceptual content. They function as semantic intensifiers that transform abstract notions into experientially meaningful and culturally marked structures.

In many cases, lexical and phraseological means work together to form a hierarchical model of conceptual expression. At the first level, the concept is represented through a lexical unit that names its core content. At the second level, derivative words, synonymous lexical units, and contextual variants broaden the conceptual field. At the third level, phraseological expressions add imagery, emotional nuance, cultural symbolism, and evaluative depth. This layered organization can be observed in numerous concepts important for the Uzbek language worldview.

The concept mehr represents another culturally central example. As a lexical unit, it denotes kindness, affection, tenderness, and emotional warmth. Yet phraseological and stable figurative contexts expand the concept into a broader cultural category linked with family relations, humanism, parental care, and spiritual generosity. The lexical unit provides the core notion, while phraseological realizations reflect how this notion is embodied in culturally meaningful patterns of behavior and speech. Conceptual expression therefore emerges as a synthesis of nominative and figurative verbalization.

A similar pattern is found in the concept sabr. Lexically, it denotes patience, endurance, and restraint. But in Uzbek linguistic consciousness, sabr is not merely a personal quality; it is an ethical and spiritual principle. Phraseological means reveal the lived dimension of this concept, often associating it with maturity, wisdom, suffering, perseverance, and moral strength. The lexical and phraseological representation of the concept together construct a culturally dense semantic structure in which abstract meaning is transformed into a socially recognizable value.

The concept mehnat demonstrates the close connection between conceptual expression and socio-cultural ideology. At the lexical level, it refers to labor, work, and effort. At the phraseological level, it reflects dignity of труд, perseverance, productivity, and the moral evaluation of human contribution.

Phraseological usage surrounding labor often emphasizes its necessity, transformative force, and ethical significance. This reveals that conceptual expression in Uzbek is not neutral but value-oriented. Concepts are often verbalized in ways that encode social ideals and normative expectations.

The analysis further indicates that phraseological means are particularly important in expressing conceptual oppositions. Lexical antonyms can mark a conceptual contrast in a direct way, but phraseological units provide figurative elaboration of contrastive concepts such as kindness and cruelty, honor and disgrace, patience and impulsiveness, openness and deceit. Through these expressive oppositions, the conceptual system of the language becomes more vivid and memorable. Phraseology strengthens conceptual differentiation and contributes to the preservation of evaluative contrasts important for the speech community.

Another significant result concerns the role of context in conceptual expression. Lexical and phraseological units do not operate mechanically; their conceptual meanings are actualized in discourse. A lexical unit may appear neutral in isolation but gain strong conceptual and evaluative content in poetic, publicistic, or conversational context. Likewise, phraseological units may reveal different shades of conceptual meaning depending on situation, genre, and speaker intention. Therefore, conceptual expression should be understood as both a systemic and discursive phenomenon. Language stores conceptual resources in its lexical and phraseological inventory, but discourse activates and reshapes them.

The findings also confirm that phraseological means often preserve older cultural layers more effectively than lexical units. While individual words may undergo semantic narrowing, borrowing, or modernization, phraseological units tend to retain traditional images and cultural associations over longer periods. This makes phraseology an especially valuable source for reconstructing the conceptual worldview of a people. In Uzbek, many phraseological expressions reflect domestic life, kinship relations, ethical ideals, agricultural imagery, and embodied metaphors that continue to influence contemporary conceptualization.

The results of the study demonstrate that conceptual expression in the Uzbek language cannot be adequately explained through lexical semantics alone. A concept is not merely the meaning of a word; it is a broader mental-cultural formation manifested through a network of verbal means.

Lexical units provide the main point of entry into conceptual content, but phraseological units reveal how that content is experienced, evaluated, and culturally interpreted. This confirms the central idea of cognitive linguistics that language is not a passive label system but an active mechanism of conceptual organization.

The distinction between lexical and phraseological means should not be treated as a strict opposition. Rather, these means form complementary dimensions of one conceptual-verbal system. Lexical units are characterized by relative semantic clarity, categorial stability, and direct nominative function. Phraseological units are characterized by semantic integrity, imagery, expressiveness, and cultural markedness. When combined, they create a multidimensional model of conceptual expression in which direct naming and figurative interpretation coexist. This interaction is especially important in languages with rich phraseological traditions, such as Uzbek.

From the viewpoint of linguoculturology, phraseological means deserve particular attention because they preserve national patterns of conceptualization. Concepts that are important to a culture are usually accompanied by an extensive phraseological environment. This environment records not only how speakers talk about the concept but also how they value it, what emotions they connect with it, and what behavioral expectations they derive from it. In this sense, phraseology functions as a cultural commentary on lexical nomination. The lexical unit may indicate the existence of a concept, but phraseology shows its cultural life.

The article also supports the idea that conceptual expression is closely connected with evaluation. In Uzbek, many concepts are verbalized through positively or negatively marked phraseological units, reflecting the ethical orientation of linguistic consciousness. Concepts related to honor, homeland, labor, patience, kindness, and spirituality are rarely neutral in discourse. They are accompanied by evaluative meanings that guide interpretation and social response. Phraseological units are especially effective in encoding this axiological dimension because they combine semantic compression with expressive force.

Another important issue concerns the pedagogical implications of the findings. In language teaching, concepts are often introduced through vocabulary lists and dictionary definitions, but such an approach is insufficient for understanding culturally significant meanings. Learners need to see how

concepts unfold through phraseological usage and contextual realization. Teaching conceptual expression through both lexical and phraseological means can improve semantic awareness, intercultural competence, reading comprehension, and expressive speech. This is especially relevant in teaching Uzbek language and literature, where culturally central concepts often play an important role in texts.

The discussion also highlights the relevance of lexicographic representation. Traditional explanatory dictionaries typically focus on lexical units, while phraseological dictionaries present stable expressions separately. However, a concept-oriented lexicographic approach could show how lexical and phraseological means together form conceptual fields. Such an approach would be especially useful in the description of nationally significant concepts in Uzbek. It would allow scholars and learners to understand not only separate meanings but also the internal semantic and cultural structure of verbalized concepts.

Finally, the study shows that further research is needed in several directions. More detailed corpus-based analysis could reveal the frequency and contextual variability of conceptual expressions. Comparative research could investigate how similar concepts are verbalized in Uzbek and other languages. Literary analysis could demonstrate how authors manipulate lexical and phraseological means to reconstruct individual and collective conceptual worlds. These perspectives confirm that the study of conceptual expression remains a productive area for future scholarship.

The conducted analysis has shown that lexical and phraseological means play complementary and mutually enriching roles in the conceptual expression of the Uzbek language. Lexical units serve as primary nominative forms that identify and stabilize conceptual content, while phraseological units reveal its figurative, evaluative, emotional, and national-cultural dimensions. Through this interaction, concepts are represented not as static abstract notions but as living semantic formations connected with collective experience and cultural memory.

The study confirms that concepts in Uzbek are often verbalized through a layered system. The lexical level provides the semantic core, while the phraseological level expands the concept through imagery, value orientation, and expressive intensity. This is especially evident in concepts such as ko'ngil, or, vatan, mehr, sabr, and mehnat, whose linguistic representation reflects the ethical, emotional, and worldview-based foundations of Uzbek culture. Phraseological units make conceptual content more vivid, memorable, and culturally specific, while lexical units ensure semantic recognizability and structural coherence.

In theoretical terms, the findings contribute to the development of cognitive linguistics, semantics, phraseology, and linguoculturology in relation to the Uzbek language. In practical terms, they are relevant for lexicography, literary interpretation, translation studies, and language teaching. The article therefore concludes that conceptual expression in Uzbek should be studied as an integrated lexical-phraseological phenomenon. Such an approach opens broader possibilities for understanding how language embodies thought, culture, and national identity.

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