

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Comparative Analysis of Lexical Units Related to Corruption in English And Uzbek Linguocultures

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## Abstract

This article examines lexical units related to corruption in English and Uzbek from a comparative linguocultural and semantic perspective. The study proceeds from the idea that socially significant words do not function only as denotative labels, but also encode value judgments, institutional experience, collective emotions, and culturally specific ways of conceptualizing unlawful behavior. The purpose of the article is to identify the semantic organization of the corruption-related lexical field in English and Uzbek, determine the central and peripheral units in both languages, and explain how these units reflect different linguistic and cultural models of evaluating abuse of power and illicit gain. The research is based on comparative semantic analysis, componential analysis, contextual interpretation, and linguocultural analysis of lexicographic and legal sources. The material includes English dictionary definitions of corruption, bribery, bribe, graft, and related legal terminology, as well as Uzbek lexemes such as korrupsiya, pora, poraxo'rlik, and ta'magirlik fixed in lexicographic and legal discourse. The results show that in both languages the lexical field is built around the ideas of unlawful benefit, abuse of authority, and distortion of legitimate decision-making. At the same time, the English system demonstrates stronger terminological differentiation and a more institutionalized legal profile, while the Uzbek system reveals denser links between legal meaning, moral condemnation, everyday phraseology, and expressive evaluation. The article argues that these differences are important for comparative linguistics, translation studies, legal discourse analysis, and intercultural communication.

## KEYWORDS

Corruption, bribery, lexical field, linguoculture, semantics, English language, Uzbek language, pora, poraxo'rlik, ta'magirlik, legal discourse, comparative linguistics.

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary linguistics, words are increasingly studied not merely as naming units, but as carriers of cultural meaning. Research in cultural semantics and lexical semantics has shown that key words and concepts reflect historically shaped values, collective experience, and socially important distinctions. In this approach, the vocabulary of a language becomes a valuable source for reconstructing how a speech

community interprets social reality. This is especially true of ethically charged domains, where words encode not only description but also evaluation. Lexical units connected with corruption belong precisely to such a domain, because they stand at the intersection of law, morality, political culture, and everyday communication.

The relevance of the topic is determined by the fact that corruption is simultaneously a legal category and a linguocultural phenomenon. At the international level, the United Nations Convention against Corruption is described by UNODC as the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument, while the OECD glossary on corruption explains the key legal elements used to classify corruption as a criminal act in major international conventions. In English lexicography, corruption is defined as dishonest or illegal behaviour involving a person in a position of power, whereas bribery is defined as the crime of giving someone money or something else of value, often illegally, to persuade that person to do something. In Uzbek legal discourse, the law defines *korrupsiya* as unlawful use of official or service position to obtain material or non-material benefit or the unlawful provision of such benefit. These definitions show that corruption-related vocabulary is embedded in an institutional framework, but they also suggest that different languages structure this framework in different ways.

For comparative linguistics, English and Uzbek offer an instructive contrast. English possesses a well-differentiated lexical field in which broader and narrower units are relatively clearly distributed across legal, administrative, business, and media discourse. Uzbek, by contrast, combines legal terminology with a rich evaluative and phraseological layer in which the same social phenomenon is perceived through everyday moral categories. This difference makes a simple word-for-word translation insufficient. A comparative analysis must therefore address not only dictionary equivalence but also semantic structure, discourse distribution, and axiological load. The purpose of this article is to analyze the lexical units related to corruption in English and Uzbek, identify their common semantic core, describe their internal differentiation, and reveal their linguocultural specificity within the two linguistic pictures of the world.

The study is based on a qualitative comparative design. Its empirical material consists of lexicographic and legal sources that stabilize the core meanings of corruption-related vocabulary in both languages. For English, the analysis draws on dictionary definitions of corruption, bribery, bribe, and graft, as well as legal materials associated with the UK Bribery Act and the international anti-corruption framework. For Uzbek, the material includes the legal definition of *korrupsiya* in the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Combating Corruption" and dictionary entries for *pora*, *poraxo'rlik*, and

*ta'magirlik*. This source base was selected because it allows the researcher to compare not only lexical meaning but also the interface between legal codification and everyday semantic interpretation.

Methodologically, the article combines componential semantic analysis, comparative analysis, contextual interpretation, and linguocultural analysis. Componential analysis was used to identify the minimal semantic features constituting the core meanings of the examined units. Comparative analysis helped establish equivalences and asymmetries between English and Uzbek lexical items. Contextual interpretation made it possible to distinguish legal, public, and everyday uses of the same units. Linguocultural analysis was applied to reconstruct the value and figurative components of the lexical field and to determine how institutional meanings are refracted through cultural models of morality, dignity, and social condemnation. Such a method is consistent with approaches that treat words as culturally loaded units rather than neutral labels.

The analysis shows that the English lexical field related to corruption is hierarchically organized and terminologically differentiated. The broadest unit is corruption, which names dishonest or illegal behavior linked to abuse of power. Within this larger field, bribery functions as a more specific term denoting the unlawful offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of value in order to influence conduct. The UK Bribery Act guidance highlights the legal differentiation between offering or giving a bribe, receiving or accepting a bribe, bribery of a foreign public official, and failure by commercial organizations to prevent bribery. English therefore tends to represent corruption lexically through a system of abstract and legally codified distinctions. Even register-specific units such as *graft* or *kickback* retain a fairly clear relation to institutional misuse of money and power, which means that the English field is both semantically stratified and discourse-sensitive.

The Uzbek lexical field reveals a different type of organization. The broadest official unit is *korrupsiya*, which, according to Uzbek law, includes unlawful use of official or service position for personal or others' benefit and also the unlawful provision of such benefit. However, in lexicographic and everyday usage the semantic center of the field is not exhausted by the abstract word *korrupsiya*. A much more concrete nucleus is formed by *pora* and *poraxo'rlik*. The dictionary defines *poraxo'rlik* as engagement in taking or "eating" a bribe and, in legal meaning, as official crimes such as taking a bribe, giving a bribe, or acting as an intermediary in such acts. This

indicates that Uzbek lexicalization moves more readily from abstract social wrongdoing to the concrete act, the participant, and the socially visible form of behavior.

A particularly important result concerns the semantic role of ta'magirlik. This word belongs to the same evaluative field as pora and poraxo'rlik, but it is not a strict synonym of either. The dictionary defines ta'magirlik as expecting something from another person and acting with that expectation in mind. In other words, it foregrounds acquisitive expectation, self-interest, and improper hoping for gain, rather than the completed legal transaction itself. From a comparative perspective, this means that ta'magirlik overlaps with corruption-related meanings but also extends beyond them. In some contexts it approaches greed, mercenary intention, or improper solicitation rather than bribery in the narrow legal sense. This makes the Uzbek field semantically more value-saturated, because the vocabulary distinguishes not only the act of illicit transfer but also the inner motive and social posture behind it.

At the level of shared semantic features, the English and Uzbek units converge around three core components. First, both languages connect corruption-related vocabulary with illicit or dishonest gain. Second, both associate it with a person who has authority, influence, or control over an institutional decision. Third, both imply distortion of normatively proper conduct. Nevertheless, the ways in which these components are distributed across lexical units differ. In English, the distinction between corruption and bribery is relatively stable, with the first operating as a broader hyperonym and the second as a specific offense. In Uzbek, korrupsiya also functions as a broad legal term, yet public understanding often gravitates toward pora and poraxo'rlik, so the concrete act becomes the most cognitively salient representation of the broader phenomenon. This suggests that the Uzbek system is more event-centered and participant-centered, whereas the English system is more category-centered and institution-centered.

The analysis also reveals differences in the axiological and figurative layers of the lexical field. In English, negative evaluation is often encoded through legal, administrative, or compliance vocabulary. The discourse of anti-bribery policy, legal liability, public-office abuse, and international standards presents corruption as a system violation requiring prevention, control, and sanction. In Uzbek, although the legal dimension is equally present, evaluative meaning is more directly tied to

ethical judgment and personal disgrace. This is visible in phraseology associated with poraxo'rlik, especially in the lexical pattern that links bribery to "eating" a bribe, and in the example attached to ta'magirlik, where greed is said to bring human dignity low. Thus, Uzbek linguoculture verbalizes corruption not only as institutional deviation but also as moral degradation affecting social honor and personal worth.

A further result concerns discourse distribution. In English, anti-corruption vocabulary is strongly standardized by official and transnational legal discourse. The UN and OECD documents frame corruption through criminalization, law enforcement, international cooperation, and legislative implementation, while UK anti-bribery guidance is expressly designed to help organizations establish procedures to prevent bribery. In Uzbekistan, the law also frames corruption institutionally, yet it additionally emphasizes raising legal awareness and culture and forming an uncompromising attitude toward corruption in society. This means that the Uzbek official discourse openly links legal regulation with moral education. As a result, corruption-related lexemes in Uzbek more easily circulate between the legal sphere and the sphere of social-ethical condemnation, whereas in English the lexical field remains more sharply aligned with legal and governance discourse.

The obtained results confirm that lexical units related to corruption cannot be adequately described through direct bilingual equivalence alone. On the surface, English bribery and Uzbek pora appear to refer to the same phenomenon, and in many legal contexts they do function as mutual equivalents. However, their positions within the broader lexical field are not symmetrical. In English, bribery is one clearly bounded unit inside a differentiated anti-corruption vocabulary that also includes broader and narrower legal or semi-legal terms. In Uzbek, pora is not just one member of the field but a conceptually central and socially vivid unit through which the wider phenomenon of corruption is often imagined. Consequently, translation and comparative analysis must distinguish between equivalence of denotation and equivalence of conceptual prominence.

This asymmetry has important linguocultural implications. English tends to conceptualize corruption lexically through institutional categories and offense structure. This is evident from the prominence of formal legal distinctions in international and national anti-bribery instruments. Uzbek linguoculture, by contrast, integrates official legal meanings

with socially embodied moral judgment. The lexical relationship between *pora*, *poraxo'rlik*, and *ta'magirlik* shows that the language is interested not only in the unlawful act but also in the ethically disapproved desire, expectation, and characterological orientation underlying it. Such a configuration reflects a cultural model in which social wrongdoing is interpreted through both law and interpersonal morality.

The findings are also significant for discourse studies. In legal and policy texts, English corruption vocabulary is highly formalized and tends to maintain terminological boundaries. In Uzbek public discourse, by contrast, boundaries between legal and moral nomination are more permeable. The same social reality may be named through a legal abstraction such as *korruptsiya*, a concrete act noun such as *pora*, a behavior noun such as *poraxo'rlik*, or an evaluative motive noun such as *ta'magirlik*. This lexical flexibility increases expressive power but may also complicate terminological precision in translation and comparative legal writing. From the viewpoint of linguocultural semantics, however, this very flexibility is valuable because it reveals which aspects of the phenomenon are culturally foregrounded: action, benefit, appetite, shame, and social disapproval.

Another implication concerns the relationship between anti-corruption discourse and language policy. When a legal system defines corruption broadly and simultaneously links anti-corruption policy with the development of legal consciousness and public intolerance, it actively shapes the semantic and evaluative environment in which relevant lexical units function. The Uzbek legal framework explicitly combines regulation with the task of forming an uncompromising societal attitude toward corruption, while international documents emphasize implementation, prevention, and criminalization. This suggests that lexical meaning in the field of corruption is continuously reinforced by institutions. Accordingly, the lexical field should be viewed not as a static dictionary inventory but as a dynamic zone where law, public morality, and linguistic habit interact.

The comparative analysis undertaken in this article has shown that English and Uzbek possess partially equivalent but structurally different lexical systems for naming corruption-related realities. In both languages, the semantic nucleus of the field is formed by the notions of unlawful benefit, abuse of authority, and distortion of legitimate decision-making. Yet English tends to organize these meanings through a more

differentiated and institutionally stabilized lexicon in which corruption, bribery, graft, and related terms occupy relatively distinct positions. Uzbek, while also having a broad legal term in *korruptsiya*, gives exceptional conceptual salience to *pora* and *poraxo'rlik*, and supplements them with the value-marked concept *ta'magirlik*, which captures acquisitive expectation and moral deficiency.

Thus, the study confirms that corruption-related vocabulary is not merely terminological but deeply linguocultural. Its lexical units preserve legal distinctions, moral evaluations, and culturally specific patterns of conceptualization. For comparative linguistics, this means that accurate analysis must include the semantic field, discourse register, and value component of each unit. For translation studies, the results show that bribery, *pora*, *poraxo'rlik*, and *ta'magirlik* cannot always be treated as simple one-to-one equivalents. Their differences are precisely what make them important objects of linguistic and cultural interpretation.

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