

Cultural Semantics of Language Units From a Linguocultural Perspective

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Abstract: Language is not merely a system of signs used for communication but a powerful cultural mechanism through which societies encode, preserve, and transmit their collective experience. Linguoculturology, as an interdisciplinary field, explores the interaction between language and culture and focuses on how cultural meanings are embedded in linguistic units. This article examines the cultural semantics of language units from a linguocultural perspective, emphasizing the role of words, phraseological units, metaphors, and proverbs as carriers of cultural knowledge. Using a qualitative analytical approach based on existing linguistic and cultural studies, the research demonstrates that linguistic meaning extends beyond denotation to include culturally conditioned connotations shaped by history, values, and worldview. The findings highlight the importance of cultural semantics in understanding national identity, intercultural communication, and the anthropocentric nature of language.

Keywords: linguoculturology, cultural semantics, language units, worldview, culture and language

Introduction

In contemporary linguistics, language is increasingly viewed not only as a formal system of grammatical rules and lexical units, but also as a reflection of human experience, cultural memory, and social values. This shift has led to the emergence and development of interdisciplinary approaches that place the human being at the center of linguistic analysis. One such approach is linguoculturology, which studies the relationship between language and culture and examines how cultural meanings are encoded in linguistic units.

The relevance of linguocultural studies is closely connected with globalization and intensified intercultural communication. In a multicultural world, misunderstandings often arise not because of grammatical or lexical errors, but due to differences in cultural semantics embedded in language units. Words and expressions that appear equivalent on the surface may carry different cultural associations and symbolic meanings in different linguistic communities. The concept of cultural semantics refers to the culturally conditioned meanings that linguistic units acquire within a particular speech community. Historical development, social norms, traditions, and collective worldview shape these meanings. From a linguocultural perspective, language units function as carriers of cultural information, reflecting how a community perceives reality, organizes experience, and interprets the world. This article aims to analyze the cultural semantics of language units within the framework of linguoculturology. The study focuses on identifying how cultural meanings are manifested in lexical items, phraseological units, metaphors, and proverbs. By examining these

units, the article seeks to demonstrate that linguistic meaning is inseparable from culture and that understanding cultural semantics is essential for a deeper comprehension of language.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research methodology grounded in theoretical analysis and interpretative examination of secondary sources in the fields of linguistics and linguoculturology. The research does not rely on empirical corpus data or quantitative measurement; instead, it aims to synthesize, systematize, and critically interpret existing scholarly perspectives on the relationship between language and culture. Such an approach is particularly appropriate for investigating culturally conditioned meanings, which are not always directly observable through frequency-based or statistical methods. The primary data for analysis consist of well-established theoretical works in cultural linguistics, cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and anthropocentric language studies. These sources provide conceptual frameworks and analytical tools for understanding how cultural knowledge, values, and worldviews are encoded in linguistic structures. By drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship, the study ensures a comprehensive and conceptually informed interpretation of cultural semantics.

The analytical framework of the research is based on the linguocultural approach, which conceptualizes language as an integral component of culture and a means of preserving and transmitting collective experience. Within this framework, linguistic units are examined not only in terms of their formal or denotative meaning, but also in terms of their culturally motivated semantic layers. The analysis proceeds through several interrelated stages:

conceptual analysis of key linguocultural notions such as *culture*, *worldview*, *cultural meaning*, and *national mentality*, aimed at clarifying their theoretical definitions and analytical relevance;

semantic interpretation of language units that possess culturally marked meanings, focusing on the interaction between denotative content and culturally embedded connotations;

comparative reflection on how similar cultural concepts are linguistically encoded across different languages and cultural traditions, where relevant, to reveal universal and culture-specific patterns of meaning construction.

Particular attention is paid to culturally significant language units, including lexemes with symbolic meanings, idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and proverbs, as these forms most clearly manifest the intersection of language and culture. Such units are treated as condensed representations of cultural values, social norms, and collective cognitive models. Their analysis enables the identification of underlying cultural assumptions and conceptual structures that shape linguistic semantics.

Overall, the chosen methodology allows for a nuanced interpretation of cultural meaning in language and facilitates the reconstruction of culturally grounded conceptual models. This qualitative, interpretative approach is well-suited to the anthropocentric orientation of the study, emphasizing the role of human experience, cultural memory, and worldview in the formation of linguistic meaning.

Results

Linguoculturology views language as a repository of culture, where linguistic units serve as signs not only of objects and actions but also of cultural meanings and values. Cultural semantics emerges at the intersection of linguistic meaning and cultural interpretation. Unlike purely denotative meaning, cultural semantics includes connotations, evaluations, and symbolic associations shared by members of a linguistic community. From this perspective, language units are understood as culturally marked elements that reflect national mentality and collective experience. Cultural semantics is particularly evident in concepts that are central to a society's worldview, such as family, honor, freedom, nature, or time. These concepts are linguistically represented in ways that reveal culturally specific attitudes and value systems.

Lexical Units as Carriers of Cultural Meaning

Lexical units are among the most direct carriers of cultural semantics. Many words possess meanings that cannot be fully understood without cultural knowledge. Such words often reflect social practices, historical realities, or culturally significant phenomena. For example, words related to kinship, social hierarchy, or traditional customs often encode cultural norms and expectations. Even seemingly universal concepts such as *home*, *work*, or *hospitality* may differ significantly in their cultural semantics across languages. The cultural meaning of these words extends beyond their dictionary definitions and includes emotional and evaluative components shaped by cultural experience. Culturally marked vocabulary often resists direct translation because equivalent terms in another language may lack the same cultural associations. This demonstrates that lexical meaning is not purely linguistic but deeply embedded in cultural context.

Phraseological Units and Cultural Memory

Phraseological units, including idioms and fixed expressions, play a crucial role in preserving cultural memory. These units often originate from historical events, traditional practices, or folklore and serve as condensed representations of collective experience.

Idioms frequently reflect culturally specific metaphors and symbolic imagery. Their meanings are rarely transparent and cannot be inferred from the meanings of individual components. Instead, they rely on shared cultural knowledge. As a result, phraseological units function as markers of cultural identity and group belonging. The cultural semantics of idioms reveals how a community conceptualizes abstract ideas such as success, failure, morality, or emotions. Through idiomatic expressions, language transmits cultural norms and evaluations across generations.

Metaphors and Cultural Conceptualization

Metaphor is a powerful cognitive and cultural mechanism through which people understand and structure reality. From a linguocultural perspective, metaphors are not merely stylistic devices but fundamental tools of cultural conceptualization. Cultural metaphors reflect how different societies perceive the world and organize experience. For instance, metaphors related to time, life, or emotions often vary across cultures, revealing distinct conceptual models. These metaphors become conventionalized in language and acquire stable cultural meanings.

The study of metaphorical language shows that cultural semantics operates at a deep cognitive level. Metaphors encode culturally specific ways of thinking and contribute to the formation of a national worldview.

Proverbs as Expressions of Cultural Values

Proverbs represent one of the most explicit forms of cultural semantics. They encapsulate moral principles, social norms, and collective wisdom in concise linguistic forms. Proverbs are culturally authoritative statements that guide behavior and reinforce shared values. The semantic structure of proverbs often reflects culturally specific attitudes toward work, family, fate, and interpersonal relations. Their continued use in everyday speech demonstrates their role in maintaining cultural continuity.

From a linguocultural perspective, proverbs function as evaluative tools that shape social behavior and reinforce cultural identity. Their meanings are deeply rooted in cultural context and cannot be fully understood without reference to the cultural background in which they emerged.

Discussion

The analysis of linguistic units conducted from a linguocultural perspective clearly confirms the fundamental interdependence of language and culture. The results demonstrate that cultural semantics permeates all levels of the linguistic system, ranging from individual lexical items to complex figurative and phraseological expressions. This observation strongly supports the anthropocentric view of language, according to which linguistic meaning is shaped by human cognition, lived experience, and culturally mediated perception of reality rather than by purely formal or structural mechanisms.

The findings further indicate that linguistic units do not function as passive reflections of an objective external reality. Instead, they actively participate in constructing reality by organizing experience through culturally specific conceptual models. These models determine which aspects of experience are foregrounded, how they are categorized, and how they are evaluated within a given linguistic community. As a result, cultural semantics plays a central role in the formation and maintenance of national identity, collective memory, and worldview. Language thus emerges as a dynamic medium through which culture is not only expressed and preserved, but also continuously reproduced and transformed in response to social and historical change. From a broader theoretical perspective, the results align with key assumptions of cultural linguistics and cognitive linguistics, particularly the idea that meaning is grounded in shared cultural knowledge and embodied experience. The presence of culturally marked connotations in words, metaphors, idioms, and proverbs illustrates how linguistic semantics encodes value systems, social norms, and symbolic representations that may remain implicit to native speakers but pose significant challenges for non-native users of the language.

These findings have important practical implications for intercultural communication, translation studies, and foreign language education. Even a high level of grammatical and lexical competence does not guarantee successful communication if culturally embedded meanings are misunderstood or ignored. In intercultural contexts, misinterpretation of cultural semantics may lead to communicative breakdowns, pragmatic failures, or unintended shifts in meaning. Consequently, effective communication in a globalized world requires not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural awareness and interpretative competence. Moreover, the results underscore the methodological significance of the linguocultural approach. The study demonstrates that analyzing language units in isolation from their cultural context provides an incomplete and often superficial understanding of their semantic potential. Cultural semantics enriches traditional semantic analysis by uncovering hidden layers of meaning shaped by collective experience, historical memory, and culturally specific patterns of conceptualization. Therefore, integrating linguistic and cultural analysis offers a more comprehensive framework for interpreting meaning and contributes to a deeper understanding of the anthropocentric nature of language.

Conclusion

This article has examined the cultural semantics of language units from a linguocultural perspective, demonstrating that linguistic meaning extends far beyond denotation. Words, phraseological units, metaphors, and proverbs function as carriers of cultural knowledge, reflecting a community's history, values, and worldview. The study confirms that cultural semantics is a key component of linguistic meaning and plays a vital role in shaping national identity and cultural continuity. Linguoculturology provides an effective framework for analyzing the interaction between language and culture and highlights the anthropocentric nature of language. Future research may focus on comparative linguocultural analysis of specific concepts across languages or explore the dynamics of cultural semantics in modern digital communication. Understanding cultural meanings encoded in language remains essential for advancing linguistic theory and promoting intercultural understanding.

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