

STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC AND FUNCTIONAL-STYLISTIC ASPECTS OF THE ANTONYMIC CONCEPTS OF “HONESTY” AND “THEFT” IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LINGUOCULTURES

Maxkamova Durdona

Abstract: This article examines the concepts of “honesty” and “theft” as opposing semantic units in the English and Uzbek languages. Their verbalizers – that is, the linguistic means by which these concepts are expressed—are comparatively analyzed from structural-semantic, stylistic, and functional perspectives. The study identifies cultural characteristics, cognitive-linguistic foundations, and contextual uses in discourse. The results reveal the evaluative components and semantic load of these concepts in national cognition.

Keywords: concept, antonymy, verbalizer, linguoculture, evaluation, semantics, discourse, stylistics

Introduction. Concepts expressed through language reflect a people’s culture, moral values, and social consciousness. The concepts of “honesty” and “theft” occupy an important place in both cultures, based on moral and anthropological criteria. These are expressed in language through various lexical units and carry unique semantic, stylistic, and functional features. This article focuses on analyzing the verbalization of these two opposing concepts.

Structural-Semantic Analysis

In Uzbek. The concept of “honesty” is commonly expressed through lexical units such as: to‘g‘ri (straight/upright), halol (honest), rostgo‘y (truth-teller), vijdonli (conscientious), qonuniy (lawful), odamiy (humane). These words denote moral virtue in a denotative sense and convey positive evaluation connotatively.

Theft is expressed through: o‘g‘ri (thief), firibgar (swindler), aldamchi (deceiver), mulkni o‘zlashtiruvchi (embezzler), nohalol (dishonest), poraxo‘r (bribe-taker). These units are based on a negative evaluative semantic background.

In English. “Honesty” is conveyed by: honesty, integrity, truthfulness, uprightness, fairness, decency. These terms signify moral purity, lawfulness, and fair societal behavior.

“Theft” is represented by: theft, fraud, embezzlement, dishonesty, scam, robbery. These terms are associated with unethical actions and legal violations.

Functional-Stylistic Analysis

Formal-Style Context. In formal texts and legal documents, both languages use concept pairs like “honesty” / “dishonesty” and “to‘g‘rilik” / “firibgarlik” with clear semantic boundaries and sometimes as technical terms:

Dishonesty in tax declarations is a criminal offense.

Literary and Journalistic Style. In literary works, these concepts are often conveyed using metaphorical and emotional language:

He was the embodiment of integrity. – U to‘g‘rilik timsoli edi.

Or: He lived off of lies and fraud. – U yolg‘on va firib bilan yashadi.

Collocations and Idioms. Uzbek: To‘g‘ri yo‘lda yurmoq, halol non topmoq, qalbi toza odam; Qo‘li yengil, cho‘ntakbosar, tag‘in qop ketdi. English: Walk the straight and narrow, an honest living, a man of principle; Pickpocket, white-collar crime, pulling a fast one.

Cognitive-Linguistic Approach

Mental Mapping. The Uzbek mental schema of “honesty” typically follows a chain such as Halollik → Vijdon → Adolat → Tavakkal. In English, it becomes Honesty → Integrity → Responsibility → Rule

of Law. For “theft,” Uzbek reflects Firib → Ishonchni suiiste’mol qilish → Kambag’alni aldash; while English follows Fraud → Deception → Abuse of Power.

Conceptual Metaphors. Uzbek “to’g’ri yo’l” and English “walk the straight and narrow” both conceptualize morality as a straight path. Uzbek “qo’li yengil” and English “sticky fingers” metaphorically represent dishonesty through physical expressions.

Socio-Cultural Foundations

Historical and Religious Background. In Uzbek culture, honesty is often associated with Islamic ethics, emphasizing the clear distinction between “halol” and “haram.” In English-speaking contexts, honesty relates to Protestant work ethics, reflecting moral discipline and civic integrity.

Social Interpretation. In Uzbek society, honesty reflects family honor and social dignity. In English, being “an honest citizen” refers to law-abiding and civic responsibility.

Pragmatic Aspects and Communicative Contexts. “Honesty” is often associated with positive illocutionary acts such as advising and confessing: “I want to be honest with you...” “Men siz bilan ochiqchasiga gaplashmoqchiman.”

“Theft” terms are used for accusation and condemnation: “He committed fraud, not just a mistake.” / “Bu firibgarlik, oddiy xato emas.”

Application in Political and Corporate Discourse. English political discourse: “We need leaders with integrity.” / “Zero tolerance for corruption.” Uzbek public statements: “Halol mehnat qiladigan rahbar kerak.” / “Vijdonli xodimlar eng muhim kapitaldir.”

Conclusion. The comparative study of “honesty” and “theft” across English and Uzbek linguocultures reveals that these moral concepts are expressed through complex systems of verbal, cognitive, and cultural representations. Mental models, metaphoric structures, and socio-historical foundations all contribute to shaping the semantics and usage of these concepts. Understanding their linguistic realizations in cross-cultural contexts reinforces the idea that language is not only a communication tool but also a mirror of national worldview and ethical orientation.

The perception of concepts like honesty and theft is not only linguistic or cultural but also rooted in universal cognitive-emotional processing.

Honesty and Trust. Research in social psychology (e.g., Rotter, 1967) shows that honesty is directly linked to interpersonal trust. People tend to trust those who are perceived as honest, making this concept central to social cohesion. “Honesty builds trust; trust builds relationships.” This principle holds in both Uzbek and English cultures, though the expression and intensity may vary.

Moral Judgment of Theft. Studies in moral psychology (Hauser, 2006) suggest that theft triggers moral disgust and empathic anger, regardless of culture. However, the framing of the theft (e.g., stealing out of need vs greed) affects its moral evaluation.

In Uzbek discourse, “o’g’rilik” due to poverty may evoke sympathy. In English, phrases like “desperate times call for desperate measures” illustrate similar contextual empathy.

Lexical Variation and Register Sensitivity. Different registers (formal, informal, literary, legal) influence the choice of lexical items for these concepts.

Honesty. Formal: integrity, probity, rectitude. Neutral: honesty, truthfulness

Informal/slang: straight-shooter, no-BS type

Theft. Legal: larceny, embezzlement, misappropriation. Everyday: stealing, robbery, theft. Slang: rip-off, heist, lift (as verb: “He lifted a watch.”)

This variation emphasizes the stylistic richness and contextual sensitivity of these concepts across linguistic boundaries.

Corpus-Based Insights. A corpus linguistics approach (e.g., BNC or COCA for English, National Uzbek Corpus) can reveal collocational behavior and frequency patterns. Examples from COCA (English): “Honesty and integrity” (high co-occurrence)

“Charged with theft” (frequent in news/legal register)

Potential Uzbek corpus parallels: “Halollik belgisi” (symbol of honesty); “Firibgarlik aybi bilan” (accused of fraud)

These patterns highlight not only linguistic habits but also cultural framing.

Comparative Proverbs and Cultural Wisdom. Proverbs encode long-standing moral views about honesty and theft in each culture.

Uzbek Proverb English Equivalent.

Halollik boylikdan ustun – Honesty is the best policy

O‘g‘ri bozorni buzadi – One rotten apple spoils the bunch

Yolg‘onchi ovchi bo‘lmas – A liar won't make a good hunter

O‘g‘rining ishi bir kun – A thief’s day will come

These proverbial expressions offer valuable insight into moral archetypes and ethical priorities in each culture

Implications for Translation and Intercultural Communication

When translating or interpreting concepts like “honesty” and “theft,” equivalence is not just linguistic but cultural. For example: translating “white-collar crime” as just “o‘g‘rilik” loses the nuance of class and social position.

“Halol rizq” might need explanatory phrases in English to convey religious connotations. Such examples demonstrate the need for cultural competence in cross-linguistic communication.

References:

1. Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press.
2. Wierzbicka, A. (1992). *Semantics, Culture, and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Culture-Specific Configurations*. Oxford University Press.
3. Ўzbek tilining izohli lug‘ati. (2006). Tashkent: O‘zME.
4. Cambridge Dictionary. (2024). *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*.
5. Sharipov, S. (2017). *Lingvokulturologiya asoslari*. Toshkent: Fan va texnologiya.