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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONTACT (TOUCH) VERBS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract: This article investigates the functional-semantic and cognitive-conceptual nature of physical and mental contact (tactile perception and interaction) verbs in the English and Uzbek languages from a comparative perspective. The linguistic manifestation of the concept of contact in two typologically distinct languages is revealed using componential analysis and frame semantics. Based on the theoretical views of global and Uzbek linguists, the analysis highlights national-cultural and typological features in the semantic structure of contact verbs.

Keywords: contact verbs, verbs of touch, comparative analysis, functional semantics, frame semantics, tactile perception, semantic asymmetry.

INTRODUCTION

In modern linguistic paradigms, studying lexical units that reflect the linguistic picture of the world and human sensory-perceptual activity holds an important place. Humans utilize physical and verbal forms of communication in the process of perceiving the environment, objects, and interacting with them. Therefore, contact verbs, which form a specific subcategory of action and state in the language system, represent a universal linguistic phenomenon expressing direct or indirect connection between a subject and an object.

The functional-semantic conceptualization of contact verbs is not merely the expression of a physical act of touching or colliding; rather, it is the crystallization of this action in human cognition in the form of specific frames, scenarios, and cognitive models [1, p. 45]. Since English and Uzbek belong to different systems (inflective and agglutinative) according to their typological structure, significant asymmetric cases are observed in the semantic structure and pragmatic potential of their contact verbs. The relevance of this article is determined by the necessity to reveal these structural differences from a cognitive and functional-semantic perspective and to provide a systematic comparative analysis of contact (touch) verbs in English and Uzbek.

METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Contact verbs have been studied from various aspects in global and Uzbek linguistics. Particularly, in Western linguistics, frame semantics founded by Charles Fillmore served as an important foundation for determining the semantic valency of verbs and uncovering their cognitive nature [2, p. 112]. Additionally, B. Levin separated the group of "verbs of contact by impact" in her classification of English verbs and investigated their syntactic alternations [3, p. 248].

In Uzbek linguistics, while the semantics of verbs and the conceptual nature of linguistic units received a general linguistic interpretation in the works of scholars like N. Mahmudov and R. Sayfullayeva, the linguistic environment and semantic composition of action and contact verbs were reflected in the research of M. Mamasoliyev [4, p. 56]. N. Mahmudov defined the place of the anthropocentric paradigm in cognitive linguistic analyses, proving that the human factor in the linguistic picture of the world is shaped through sensory feelings [5, p. 12]. Furthermore, the approaches of R. Shirinova in studying the national-cultural asymmetry of concepts on an international scale from a comparative perspective carry great importance in revealing the transfer capabilities of the contact concept [6, p. 88].

Componential analysis, conceptual analysis, the comparative-typological method, and contextual analysis were utilized during the research process. Samples from modern English and Uzbek fiction along with lexicographical sources served as the linguistic materials.

MAIN BODY AND RESULTS

1. Linguistic Nature and Classificatory Features of Contact Verbs

In the linguistic system, contact verbs reflect the physical connection between a subject (the agent of the action) and an object (the item or person toward whom the action is directed). According to M. Mamasoliyev's classification, an active group of action verbs in the Uzbek language relies precisely on the semes of physical impact and collision [4, p. 59]. During the comparative analysis, it is appropriate to divide this group of verbs into the following micro-semantic groups based on their level of conceptualization:

- **Tactile (pure physical touch) verbs:** Eng. *touch, hold, feel*; Uzb. *tegmoq, ushlamoq, paypaslamoq*.
- **Impact (strong force and striking) verbs:** Eng. *hit, strike, press, rub*; Uzb. *urmoq, bosmoq, ishqalamoq*.
- **Destructive-contact (modifying the shape of the object) verbs:** Eng. *break, crush, scratch*; Uzb. *sindirmoq, ezmoq, tirnamoq*.
- **Emotional-psychological contact verbs:** Eng. *stroke, pat, hug*; Uzb. *silamoq, quchmoq, bag‘riga bosmoq*.

In English, many contact verbs embody both the action and the tool (*instrument*) with which this action is performed within their single lexical seme (the phenomenon of syncretism).

For example: *to hammer, to elbow* (to push with an elbow). In the Uzbek language, such a conceptual meaning is realized mainly through analytical methods, i.e., based on the "noun + verb" or "noun in the instrumental case + verb" model (*tirsak bilan turtmoq, bolg‘a bilan urmoq*). As R. Sayfullayeva points out, the syntactic environment in Uzbek is the primary means of differentiating verb meanings [7, p. 142].

2. Structure of the Contact Frame in English and Uzbek

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, a contact verb forms a frame (a cognitive structure) united around a specific "CONCEPT." Combining the theories of Ch. Fillmore and B. Levin, the contact frame can be modeled using the following universal cognitive formula:

Framecontact

=[Subject (Agent)]→[Action (Contact Verb)]→[Object (Patient)]+⟨Means (Instrument)⟩+⟨Loc us (Point of Contact)⟩

The expression of these slots in English tends more toward syntactic conciseness. For example:

***John touched Mary on the shoulder.* [8, p. 102]**

Here, the subject (*John*), object (*Mary*), and point of contact (*on the shoulder*) are clearly demarcated within the sentence structure and indicated through separate prepositional units. In the Uzbek language, this frame is formed in accordance with its agglutinative nature as follows:

Jon Merining yelkasiga qo‘lini tegizdi (yoki yelkasidan tutdi).

In Uzbek, the point of contact is often expressed through a genitive modifier or the dative/ablative cases (*-ga, -dan*), modeling the directional scenario of the action with more precise morphological elements compared to English.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. Semantic Asymmetry and Conceptual Metaphorization

The functional-semantic field of contact verbs is not restricted to the physical level alone, but transfers to the abstract (mental) sphere as well. This process occurs based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory established by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson. Physical touch serves as the basis for mental states of understanding, feeling, or psychological impact [9, p. 84].

Table 1. Mapping of the Metaphorical Conceptualization of Contact Verbs

Dominant Concept	English Language (Metaphorical Transfer)	Uzbek Language (Metaphorical Transfer)	Semantic Nature (Asymmetry)
Emotional Impact	<i>To touch someone's heart</i> (To move, to soften the soul)	<i>Yuragiga yetib bormoq / Ta'sir qilmoq</i>	In English: Expresses positive/neutral emotional proximity. In Uzbek: Realized through analytical phrases.

Dominant Concept	English Language (Metaphorical Transfer)	Uzbek Language (Metaphorical Transfer)	Semantic Nature (Asymmetry)
Psychological Hurt / Offense	<i>To be touched by a remark</i> (To note, to be slightly affected)	<i>Gapning tegishi</i> (To touch one's pride, to get offended)	In Uzbek: The verb <i>tegmoq</i> carries a highly negative connotation (causing pain) in the abstract sphere.
Intellectual Perception	<i>To grasp the idea / To touch upon a subject</i>	<i>Mavzuni ushlamoq / tushunmoq -> Aqlga sig'dirmoq</i>	In English, tactile perception (holding) is directly linked to mental comprehension (<i>grasp</i>).
Material / Social Contact	<i>To keep in touch</i>	<i>Aloqa o'rnatmoq / Aloqada bo'lmoq</i>	The theology of expressing social relations through the symbol of physical contact is similar in both languages.

The verb *touch* in English is highly active in the emotional domain, carrying the meaning of reaching a person's soul or moving them. As N. Mahmudov notes, a nation's linguistic picture of the world is formed from its mentality of perceiving the external world [5, p. 15]. In Uzbek, however, when the verb *tegmoq* shifts conceptually away from the physical contact sphere, it acquires a predominantly negative connotation: *Uning gapi menga tegdi* (meaning: it hurt me, it touched my pride). Positive emotional contact in Uzbek is expressed through phrases like *yuragiga yetib bormoq* (to reach the heart) or *ta'sir qilmoq* (to affect). As demonstrated in R. Shirinova's research, such instances generate cross-linguistic conceptual asymmetry and problems in translation [6, p. 92].

2. Analysis of Aspectual and Dynamic Features

Contact verbs also possess specific aspectual characteristics depending on the duration and completion of the action. According to T.V. Bulygina's classification, processes possess either a "momentary" or a "durative" character [10, p. 21].

In English, verbs like *hit*, *kick*, and *tap* inherently denote momentary contact. If their duration needs to be expressed, English utilizes grammatical aspect capabilities (Continuous forms):

He was tapping the table.

In Uzbek, a rich morphological and affixation system addresses this function perfectly. The sub-affixes *-gila*, *-la*, and *-qi*, recognized in Uzbek linguistics, express the multiple and repetitive nature of the action, i.e., the durative character of the contact:

- *urmoq* — *urgilamoq* (continuous and irregular contact);
- *turtmoq* — *turtkilamoq* (repetitive physical impact);
- *taqillatmoq* (acoustic contact).

This situation demonstrates that the capacity to activate contact frames is higher morphologically in the Uzbek language, and syntactically-analytically in the English language.

CONCLUSION

Studying the functional-semantic conceptualization and systematic comparative analysis of contact verbs in English and Uzbek based on the foundations of global and Uzbek linguistics allows for the following scientific conclusions:

1. **Systemic-Structural Differences:** In English, contact verbs lean more toward syntactic conciseness and conceptual syncretism, incorporating the tool and manner of action within themselves. In Uzbek, the manner and instrument of action are modulated mainly through analytical structures and a rich system of affixation (sub-affixes).
2. **Principles of Cognitive Modeling:** Although the contact frame possesses similar slot structures in both languages, the pragmatic and syntactic distribution of these slots in the text varies based on the typological and agglutinative/inflective properties of the respective language.
3. **National-Cultural Metaphorization:** When physical contact verbs transfer to the mental and emotional spheres, national mentality and cultural codes are activated. While English *touch* mostly expresses a neutral-positive aesthetic emotion, Uzbek *tegmoq* functionally acquires a negative-psychological connotation (hurting pride, causing distress) in certain contexts.

The results of this study can serve as an important theoretical and practical source in foreign language teaching methodologies, lexicographical practice, overcoming artistic translation problems, and gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of verbs of touch.

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