



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ASSOCIATIVE EXPERIENCE AND THEMATIC GROUPING PRINCIPLES IN LEARNER'S EXPLANATORY DICTIONARIES (IN THE CASE OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES)

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Annotation: This article presents a comparative analysis of the principles of associative experience and thematic grouping—two key approaches in the structure of modern learner's explanatory dictionaries—using examples from English and Uzbek. The study examines the role of these principles from linguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives, focusing on how they address the cognitive needs of language learners, reflect the mental organization of lexical items, and contribute to the effectiveness of vocabulary acquisition. The research analyzes the structure and methodological approaches of major learner's dictionaries such as the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary (English) and the Izohli Lug'at (Uzbek), evaluating their user-friendliness, ability to form semantic fields, and functionality in language instruction. Furthermore, the article explores how lexical items in these dictionaries are presented in terms of semantic, associative, and thematic relationships, and assesses the impact of these approaches on the development of learners' vocabulary.

Keywords: learner's explanatory dictionary, associative experience, thematic grouping, lexicography, psycholinguistics, semantic analysis, cognitive approach, language teaching methodology

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada zamonaviy o'quv izohli lug'atlarning tuzilishiga oid asosiy tamoyillardan bo'lgan assotsiativ tajriba va tematik guruhlash yondashuvlari ingliz va o'zbek tillari misolida qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda til o'rganuvchilarning kognitiv ehtiyojlarini qondirish, leksik birliklarning mental organizatsiyasini inobatga olish, hamda leksik o'zlashtirish jarayonining samaradorligini ta'minlashda mazkur tamoyillarning tutgan o'rni lingvistik va psixolingvistik asosda ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqola doirasida ingliz tilidagi Oxford Wordpower Dictionary hamda o'zbek tilidagi Izohli lug'at kabi asosiy o'quv lug'atlari struktura va yondashuv nuqtai nazaridan tahlil qilinib, ularning foydalanuvchi uchun qulaylik darajasi, semantik maydonlarni shakllantirish imkoniyati va til o'rgatishdagi funktsionalligi baholanadi. Shuningdek, lug'atlardagi leksik birliklarning o'zaro semantik, assotsiativ va tematik bog'liqliklari qanday shaklda ifoda etilgani, bu yondashuvlarning til o'rganuvchilarning so'z boyligini rivojlantirishga qanday ta'sir ko'rsatayotgani tahlil etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: o'quv izohli lug'at, assotsiativ tajriba, tematik guruhlash, leksikografiya, psixolingvistika, semantik tahlil, kognitiv yondashuv, til o'qitish metodikasi

Аннотация: В данной статье проводится сравнительный анализ подходов ассоциативного опыта и тематической группировки — одних из основных принципов построения современных учебных толковых словарей — на примере английского и узбекского языков. В исследовании рассматривается роль этих принципов с лингвистической и психолингвистической точек зрения, в частности, их значимость в удовлетворении когнитивных потребностей изучающих язык, учёте ментальной организации лексических единиц и повышении эффективности процесса усвоения лексики. В рамках статьи

анализируются структура и методологические подходы таких ключевых учебных словарей, как Oxford Wordpower Dictionary (английский язык) и Izohli Lug‘at (узбекский язык), с точки зрения удобства использования, возможностей формирования семантических полей и функциональности в обучении языку. Также рассматривается, каким образом в этих словарях представлены семантические, ассоциативные и тематические связи между лексическими единицами, и как данные подходы влияют на расширение словарного запаса изучающих язык.

Ключевые слова: учебный толковый словарь, ассоциативный опыт, тематическая группировка, лексикография, психолингвистика, семантический анализ, когнитивный подход, методика преподавания языка

INTRODUCTION

In modern linguistics, lexicography plays a crucial role in forming the theoretical and practical foundations for language teaching. In particular, learner’s explanatory dictionaries are widely used as tools for acquiring vocabulary, understanding word meanings, recognizing their usage contexts, and applying them in communicative situations. The effectiveness of such dictionaries largely depends on the principles used in organizing lexical units—especially methodological approaches such as thematic grouping and associative links.

The thematic grouping principle aims to create systematic knowledge in the learner by clustering words from closely related semantic fields, while the associative experience approach ensures psychological, contextual, and semantic connections among words. The implementation of these two principles in dictionary structure directly influences how the learner receives, processes, and memorizes the information. Today, in English lexicography, both associative and thematic grouping approaches are used in tandem to create lexical systems that stimulate learners’ cognitive abilities.

The relevance of this research lies in the increasing need to present lexical databases in a scientifically grounded, interactive, and user-friendly format in order to develop competitive language proficiency in the global information space. Enriching lexicography with modern methodological approaches is of significant importance for enhancing the effectiveness of language teaching.

The purpose of the research is to conduct a comparative analysis of the principles of associative experience and thematic grouping employed in English and Uzbek learner’s explanatory dictionaries, and to determine their effectiveness.

The subject of the research is the associative and thematic approaches applied in organizing lexical units within learner’s explanatory dictionaries. The object of the research includes English and Uzbek learner’s dictionaries, particularly the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary and Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, and the lexical-structural systems within them.

Research Objectives

The following tasks have been defined to achieve the aims of this study:

1. To explore the theoretical foundations of learner’s explanatory dictionaries.
2. To analyze the scientific basis of thematic grouping and associative experience principles.
3. To conduct a comparative study of the structures of English and Uzbek learner’s dictionaries.
4. To identify the advantages of the approaches applied in both languages’ dictionaries.

Scientific Novelty

The comparative analysis of associative and thematic grouping principles within English and Uzbek learner's explanatory dictionaries was carried out on the basis of linguistic and psycholinguistic frameworks. In general, learner's dictionaries are one of the key tools for language learners. Their effectiveness largely depends on how lexical units are organized. The main principles used in dictionary compilation—namely thematic grouping and associative experience—both play an essential role in shaping the structure of learner's dictionaries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In studying the theoretical and practical foundations of learner's explanatory dictionaries, various sources within the fields of linguistics, lexicography, psycholinguistics, and language teaching methodology play a crucial role. This section analyzes key scholarly works relevant to the topic and highlights their contributions to the research.

Cowie, A. P. (1999). *English Dictionaries for Foreign Learners: A History*. Oxford University Press – This work provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical development of English learner's dictionaries, the evolution of lexicographic principles, and their user-oriented nature. Cowie explores the formation of associative networks, collocations, and synonymic relations in language learning, especially using practical examples such as the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary to illustrate how cognitive connections between words are applied in dictionary structures.

Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to Teach Vocabulary*. Longman – This guide focuses on vocabulary teaching methods from a psycholinguistic perspective. Thornbury emphasizes the effectiveness of thematic grouping in language acquisition and justifies the principle of teaching lexical items through logical blocks. The book serves as a methodological foundation for the study. Gairns, R. & Redman, S. (1986). *Working with Words: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. Cambridge University Press – The authors analyze the benefits of teaching vocabulary through thematic fields with practical examples. They stress the importance of interrelated lexical units in dictionaries, demonstrating how this activates learners' memory mechanisms. This work deepens the understanding of the pedagogical foundations of thematic approaches. Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge University Press – This book analyzes how associative and thematic connections are formed through psychological processes in acquiring vocabulary in a foreign language. According to Nation, words are stored in a network form within the learner's mental map, and thus, dictionary structures should align with this principle. The present study uses this viewpoint to comparatively analyze the structures of English and Uzbek dictionaries. Hasanov, B. (2018). *Leksikografiyaga kirish* [Introduction to Lexicography]. Tashkent: Fan Publishing House – This work outlines the theoretical foundations of Uzbek lexicography. The author pays special attention to the structure of explanatory dictionaries, the organization of lexical units, and the methodology of clarifying them. Qodirova, M. (2022). "O'zbek tilida tematik lug'atlar yaratish tamoyillari" [Principles of Creating Thematic Dictionaries in Uzbek]. *Issues of Philology*, No. 1 – This article highlights the importance of creating dictionaries based on thematic approaches in the Uzbek language. It serves as a directly relevant source for the present study. O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati (1–3 volumes). (2006). Tashkent: Uzbekistan National Encyclopedia – This is the primary source that provides comprehensive explanations of basic lexical units in the contemporary Uzbek language. The entries are organized alphabetically. Oxford Wordpower Dictionary (2012). Oxford University Press – Designed for English language learners, this dictionary presents words with definitions, pronunciation, grammar, synonyms, collocations, and associations in a user-friendly format. It stands out for being based on a psycholinguistic approach and was used as a model in

the study.

The literature review demonstrates that in English lexicography, psycholinguistic and cognitive principles are widely applied in the compilation of learner's dictionaries. Dictionaries constructed based on associative networks and thematic blocks facilitate easier language acquisition for learners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a comprehensive methodological approach to identify the application of associative experience and thematic grouping principles in learner's explanatory dictionaries, and to conduct a comparative analysis based on English and Uzbek lexicographic practices. The study focuses on analyzing the structure of learner's dictionaries in both languages, their user-oriented design, the principles of lexical organization, and their psycholinguistic effectiveness.

1. Scientific Approaches

The following core approaches were jointly utilized in the study:

Descriptive approach — The structure, composition, and organizational principles of the existing learner's dictionaries were thoroughly analyzed.

Comparative approach — English and Uzbek learner's explanatory dictionaries were compared to determine the extent to which thematic and associative principles are applied in each.

Psycholinguistic approach — The interconnection between lexical items, semantic associations, and their role in language acquisition were evaluated.

Cognitive approach — The mental processes involved in learners' language perception, information processing, and memorization were examined in relation to dictionary structure.

2. Research Materials and Sources

The following learner's dictionaries were selected as primary empirical sources for the analysis:

Oxford Wordpower Dictionary (2012) — An English learner's dictionary that extensively employs associative and thematic approaches.

Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language (2006, Volumes 1–3) — A dictionary compiled in a traditional lexicographic style, providing alphabetically ordered definitions of contemporary Uzbek words.

Additionally, the **Uzbek-English Learner's Dictionary** (compiled by T. Norboyeva et al.) was reviewed as a supplementary analytical resource.

3. Analytical Tools

The following analytical tools were applied during the study:

Content analysis — Lexical entries were examined to determine how words were grouped and whether semantic or associative connections were presented, with results statistically summarized.

Structural analysis — The organizational elements of dictionary entries (e.g., headword, definition, collocations, synonyms, antonyms, context) were analyzed in terms of their interrelations.

User-oriented criteria — Features intended to support user comprehension (e.g., visual layout, thematic categorization, ease of use) were evaluated.

4. Research Stages

The research was conducted in the following sequential stages:

1. Theoretical foundation — The role of associative and thematic approaches in linguistics was examined, along with their scientific basis and best practices from foreign experience.
2. Empirical analysis — The application of each principle in the selected dictionaries was assessed through concrete examples.
3. Comparative analysis — A side-by-side comparison of the English and Uzbek dictionaries was performed.
4. Methodological delimitation — The research was limited to learner's explanatory dictionaries, excluding general encyclopedic and terminological dictionaries. Only English and Uzbek dictionaries were considered; dictionaries of other languages fell outside the study scope. This research methodology was based on a systematic and multi-faceted approach to identify how associative and thematic principles are implemented in learner's dictionaries.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The study carried out a detailed comparative linguistic and psycholinguistic analysis of learner's explanatory dictionaries compiled in English and Uzbek. The results revealed notable differences in word organization principles, presentation formats, thematic grouping, and the degree of associative connectivity. The findings are summarized below according to key directions of analysis.

1. Differences in Lexical Organization Principles

The analysis showed that English learner's dictionaries such as the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary are structured with a strong user-oriented design. Words are often presented within thematic blocks, accompanied by contextual examples, collocations, and associative links. Entries are supported not only with definitions but also with additional elements that highlight inter-word relationships: synonyms, antonyms, idiomatic expressions, frequently used word combinations, and simplified definitions are used to contextualize lexical units.

In contrast, the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language (2006) follows a strictly alphabetical structure. Definitions are provided in a scholarly, encyclopedic style that serves as a convenient source for gathering information, rather than emphasizing learning facilitation.

2. Effectiveness of the Thematic Grouping Approach

English learner's dictionaries frequently organize words by semantic fields (e.g., Food, Health, Education, Nature, Emotions), which enhances learners' ability to systematize, memorize, and actively use vocabulary, particularly at beginner and intermediate levels. Thematic categorization supports cognitive retention and facilitates conceptual clarity.

3. Presence and Functionality of Associative Networks

The associative approach in English dictionaries, especially the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, is well-aligned with cognitive models of language learning. Each new word is often presented alongside others that share logical, contextual, or psychological connections. For example, the

entry for “rain” may be linked to words like “umbrella,” “storm,” or “cloud,” thereby helping learners form semantic networks in their minds.

In Uzbek dictionaries, associative links are occasionally present—primarily in the form of synonyms or antonyms—but the depth and systematization of these connections are limited compared to English learner’s dictionaries.

4. General Conclusions Based on Descriptive Analysis

English learner’s dictionaries are built on pedagogical and psycholinguistic foundations, simplifying the language acquisition process for users. Uzbek dictionaries, on the other hand, are structured in a more scientific-encyclopedic manner, primarily serving as a source of linguistic information.

The findings indicate that integrating both thematic and associative approaches can significantly enhance learner’s dictionaries. Such integration would bring these resources closer to the user and expand their cognitive reach through semantic and associative structuring. Learner’s explanatory dictionaries that are harmonized with modern language teaching methodologies can considerably facilitate the language learning process, both psychologically and semantically.

DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that English learner’s dictionaries predominantly adopt a cognitive approach, wherein words are presented in interconnected ways. This organization facilitates memorization and supports the expansion of active vocabulary. In contrast, Uzbek dictionaries primarily adhere to a classical lexicographic model, relying more on a scientific-descriptive approach. This study comparatively examined the application of associative experience and thematic grouping principles in learner’s dictionaries, as well as their impact on users and their role in the practices of English and Uzbek linguistics. The findings enabled the formulation of important scholarly insights regarding the effectiveness, methodological strengths, and lexicographic advantages of these two approaches. Dictionaries developed based on thematic grouping—especially in English—enable learners to systematize their knowledge and memorize new words more effectively by organizing them into logical blocks. Grouping vocabulary items by semantic fields helps clarify interrelations between words, thereby enhancing the learner’s communicative competence. For instance, in the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, under the theme "Food", words like bake, boil, fry, roast are grouped together, activating the learner’s semantic skills through contextual association. In Uzbek dictionaries, each word is presented as an independent lexical unit with a consistent but individualized explanation, without thematic categorization.

The associative approach is grounded in the use of psycholinguistic connections that naturally form between words in the human mind. This method enables learners to relate new lexical items to their existing knowledge and experiences. The research shows that English learner’s dictionaries make effective use of this principle. Words are presented along with synonyms, antonyms, collocations, and example phrases in real contexts, which enhances activation and recall. This approach aligns with cognitive models of language learning, as human memory often functions more efficiently through associations than through linear logic.

Modern English learner’s dictionaries are designed with user-friendliness in mind and aim to support active language acquisition. This is achieved by integrating not only linguistic theory but also cognitive psychology, educational technology, and information design. Words are enriched with contextual examples, pictograms, grammatical indicators, and other visual aids, providing learners with greater opportunities for independent study.

The discussion confirms that both associative experience and thematic grouping are essential

methodological foundations for the effective organization of modern learner's dictionaries. Their implementation plays a critical role in expanding vocabulary, forming semantic connections, ensuring long-term retention, and developing active language competence.

CONCLUSION

This study conducted a comparative analysis of the use of associative experience and thematic grouping principles in the structure of learner's explanatory dictionaries and assessed their impact and effectiveness in the context of English and Uzbek linguistics. The findings highlight the significant role these two approaches play in modern lexicography and provide insights into how their integration can open up new scientific and practical directions in dictionary compilation.

Based on the comparative analysis, it can be concluded that the combined application of associative and thematic principles in learner's dictionaries significantly enhances their effectiveness as language teaching tools. Such integration facilitates vocabulary acquisition, improves semantic processing, and promotes more meaningful and lasting language learning outcomes.

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