

**CONCEPTUAL AND TRANSLATIONAL CHALLENGES OF "HAPPINESS" IN
ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES**

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Abstract

This study investigates the linguistic and cultural nuances of the concept of "happiness" in English and "baxt" in Uzbek. While often treated as direct equivalents in bilingual dictionaries, these terms possess distinct etymological roots and cultural connotations. This research employs a comparative linguacultural approach to identify semantic gaps. The findings reveal that English happiness is predominantly individualistic and emotion-based, whereas Uzbek *baxt* is deeply rooted in collectivism, destiny, and social status. These differences pose significant challenges for translators, requiring semantic modulation and cultural adaptation.

Keywords

happiness, baxt, concept, translation, challenges, culture, linguacultural approach, linguocognitive approach, etymology, metaphorical framing and cultural values.

Introduction

The translation of abstract concepts like "happiness" remains one of the most complex tasks in modern linguistics. As globalization increases the exchange of literature and media between English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking cultures, the demand for "faithful" translation grows. However, translation is not merely the replacement of words but the bridging of two distinct worldviews.

In English, "happiness" is a broad umbrella term covering everything from momentary joy to long-term life satisfaction. In contrast, the Uzbek "baxt" carries a heavy weight of tradition, family values, and religious undertones. The problem arises when a translator attempts a literal substitution without considering the linguacultural "DNA" of the terms. This paper aims to analyze these conceptual discrepancies and provide strategies for more effective translation.

Literature review

There are linguo-philosophical, linguo-cultural, linguo-psycholinguistic and linguo-cognitive approaches to understanding the essence of a concept. In particular, from a linguo-philosophical perspective, a concept has the following characteristics: the semantic "essence" of a word; manifested in an image, concept, symbol; logical concept; inductive-empirical concept; "ideal" object of the world.

The linguocultural interpretation of the concept can be defined as follows: the "sense" of culture in the human mind; the image of the national landscape of the world; language + thought + cultural unity; value + assessment.

From a psycholinguistic point of view, it was determined that the concept comes in the following content: V.A. Ryshalnikova's model (concept – sign, concept, image, object meaning, emotion, assessment): emotional-evaluative perception; personal content; speech, emotional content.

Based on the opinion of scientists, the linguocognitive content of the concept can be interpreted as follows: mental + psychic resource + knowledge + experience; the idiomatic nature of linguistic meaning; having different linguistic expressions; the general meaning of a synonymous series.

Summarizing the differences between the linguocultural and linguocognitive approaches to the study of concepts, V.I. Karasik describes them as follows: a linguocognitive concept is

directed from individual consciousness to culture, and a linguocultural concept is directed from culture to individual consciousness; the main component in the structure of a cultural concept is the value component; cultural concepts correspond to the main contradictions that determine the worldview; concepts are recognized as the main cultural forms that express the objective content of words, have meaning, and therefore are formed in various spheres of human existence, in particular, in the spheres of conceptuality (science), figurativeness (art) and activity (everyday life)[1].

The Polish philosopher W. Tatarkevich wrote a significant work entitled “Human Happiness and Femininity”. The author understands happiness as the highest good. Happiness can be without joy, luck and perfection. But with them its quality increases. “Happiness should be defined as complete and constant satisfaction with life in general,” says W. Tatarkevich [2]. The subjective side of happiness consists of feelings and assessments. Happiness is not contentment, but a pleasant state of the highest intensity, similar to joy. Happiness also refers to time, since it includes an assessment not only of the present, but also of the past and future prospects. W. Tatarkevich believes that it is necessary to separate the sources of happiness from the factors. He divides them into 4 groups: external interests, good feelings, favorite work, selfless interests.

Happiness largely depends on the character of a person. Different human inclinations have different meanings for happiness. People who are more open, cheerful, and sincere in life tend to be happy. To be happy, one must be satisfied with the world around them, its appearance and structure. A person expects happiness from the world, but he creates it himself. For a person's happiness, the attitude of other people, the happiness of others, is also necessary. One must be able to feel someone else's happiness.

At the same time, over time, this word has also come to mean activities, success, lifestyle, fulfillment of desires, achievement of goals, and concepts closer to moral values.

We will also cite the following synonyms of the concept of “happiness” as examples: sadness, luck, joy, happiness, success, contentment, happiness, destiny, intention, intention, ability[3].

As a result of his research on the concept of “Happiness”, T. Mardiev concludes that this concept encompasses such conceptual units as a positive state in marital (family) relations, positive kinship relations, a healthy lifestyle, positivity in collective relations (having one's place in a household, community, etc.), a spiritual and moral lifestyle, physical health, love, affection, complete satisfaction with one's lifestyle and contentment, contentment with God, fulfillment of desires, maturity, marriage or getting married, acceptance of fate, having children, and the moral and spiritual maturity of children [4].

It is enough to distinguish the concept of happiness from such concepts as joy, satisfaction, enjoyment, satisfaction on the one hand, and luck, success, and good fortune on the other hand, because the concepts that unite its scope belong to different aspects: It consists of components such as the emotional state embodied in the assessment of one's own destiny and everyday life. In terms denoting different signs, happiness is interpreted as a positive assessment of one's own destiny, based on the emotional state of the subject.

Along with the typological dissimilarity of the English and Uzbek languages, one can observe significant socio-cultural differences. This is, of course, due to their belonging to Western (European) and Eastern (Turkic) cultures. This often leads to different interpretations of the concept of “happiness” by the speakers of the language. For the speakers of the Uzbek language, the praxeological approach to the concept of “happiness” is characteristic, that is, it consists in showing the ways of achieving it.

For the speakers of the English language, happiness, regardless of how it is achieved, is a determinant of the human condition.

The lexical meanings of the concept of “happy” indicate “satisfaction with life in general”, that is, they are expressed without referring to a specific source that causes positive emotions in the context:

And because I am happy, and dance, and sing,

They think they have done me no injury (W. Blake. The Chimney Sweeper)

She's happy here, is happy there,

She is uneasy everywhere (W. Wordsworth. Lyrical Ballads)

If the context indicates a specific cause of happiness, the adjective happy denotes a specific emotion and takes its place among adjectives such as “pleased”, “glad”, “contented”, “satisfied”, “delighted”, “joyous”, “merry”, “cheerful”.

Results and Analysis

The translation of "happiness" between English and Uzbek involves navigating deep-seated differences in **etymology**, **metaphorical framing**, and **cultural values**. While English "happiness" often centers on individual emotional states and personal achievement, Uzbek "*baxt*" is frequently anchored in collective well-being, destiny, and social harmony.

1. Etymological and Semantic Divergence

The translation of the concept "happiness" between English and Uzbek presents significant challenges due to deep-rooted etymological differences and semantic divergences, moving beyond simple word-for-word equivalence. While English often links happiness to individual luck, chance, and cognitive contentment, the Uzbek concept of *baxt* is heavily influenced by collective, social, and spiritual dimensions, often prioritizing fate or communal harmony.

Etymological Divergence

- Happiness: Derived from the Middle English word "*hap*," meaning chance, fortune, or luck. Early English conceptions were associated with being "favored by fortune". The suffix "-ness" denotes a state of being, shifting the meaning toward a personal, internal emotional state of satisfaction, particularly in the 17th century.
- "Baxt": The term *baxt* (often used for happiness/luck) carries connotations of fortune, but in Uzbek, it is more closely linked to spiritual, social, and family contentment. Unlike English, which evolved toward individualistic satisfaction, *baxt* is frequently tied to destiny (*nasib*) and the collective wellbeing of the community or family.

Uzbek provides a more segmented vocabulary for happiness. While "happiness" in English is a broad umbrella, Uzbek distinguishes between *quvonch* (momentary joy), *shodlik* (externalized fun), and *saodat* (the highest, often spiritual, state of bliss).

Semantic Divergence and Cultural Context

- Individualism vs. Collectivism: English speakers often focus on happiness as a subjective, individual achievement (e.g., "the pursuit of happiness"). In contrast, Uzbek, as a high-context, collective culture, often associates *baxt* with the success of the family or the harmony of the community.
- Metaphorical Imagery: English, when describing high happiness, often uses outward, airy, or divine metaphors (e.g., "on cloud nine," "over the moon"). Uzbek, on the other hand, prioritizes inward-focused, bodily-based, or nature-driven metaphors (e.g., "*Ko'ngli tog'day bo'lish*" - feeling as strong as a mountain; "*Yuragi quvonchdan yayraydi*" - the heart blooming with joy).

- Fate vs. Agency: The English concept leans towards the individual controlling their own happiness, whereas Uzbek often includes a passive element of gratitude and acceptance of what fate provides ("*Baxt menga nasib etdi*" - happiness was meant for me). The primary translation challenge lies in the lack of direct conceptual equivalence.
- "Baxt" is not just Happiness: *Baxt* covers a broader range of concepts including "fortune," "destiny," and "bliss," often making it deeper than the English "happy," which can be used for fleeting joy.
- Idiomatic Shifts: Translating English idioms regarding happiness often fails if translated literally into Uzbek, as the imagery changes from external, mental states to internal, emotional sensations.
- Gender-Specific Context: In traditional Uzbek, *baxt* is frequently associated with a woman's marital status ("*qizning baxti - ernaing davlati*" - a girl's happiness is her husband's wealth), a nuance not present in the modern English word "happiness".

English Term	Potential Uzbek Translation	Nuance
Happiness	Baxt / Baxtiyorlik	General happiness/fortune.
Joy	Quvonch / Shodlik	Specific, temporary emotion.
Contentment	Qanoat / Orom	Inner peace/satisfaction.
Fortune/Luck	Omad	Specifically luck/favorable circumstances.

Effective translation requires shifting from a literal, word-based approach to a, conceptual, phraseological, and culturally aware approach to capture the deep-seated, often, spiritual, and, collective nature of, "baxt" in, Uzbek.

2. Metaphorical and Physiological Expressions

The translation of "happiness" between English and Uzbek presents significant challenges due to differing cultural, cognitive, and physiological conceptualizations of the emotion. While English often focuses on individualistic, high-energy, and upward-spatial metaphors, Uzbek often uses metaphors rooted in nature, spiritual harmony, and collectivism.

Here is a breakdown of the metaphorical and physiological expressions of happiness and the resulting translation challenges.

I. Metaphorical Expressions of Happiness

A. English: Verticality, Space, and Light

English frequently conceptualizes happiness as being in a high, light-filled, or active state.

- Spatial Elevation: "On cloud nine," "On top of the world," "In seventh heaven," "Walking on air".
- Light/Radiance: "Beam with joy," "Full of sunshine," "Light heart".
- Action/Energy: "Jump for joy," "Kick up their heels," "Dancing on air".

B. Uzbek: Internal, Nature-Based, and Spiritual

Uzbek metaphors often anchor happiness in the heart (*ko'ngil*) and nature, reflecting a more introspective or communal experience.

- Nature/Growth: *Ko'ngli guldek ochilmoq* (His heart opened like a flower), *Qalbida gullar ochila boshlamoq* (Flowers began to bloom in their heart).
- Internal State/Substance: *Ko'ngli tog'day bo'lish* (Heart becoming like a mountain—meaning strong/joyful).
- Light/Brightness: *Ko'ngli yorishmoq* (Heart brightened/illuminated).
- Fate/Destiny: *Baxt qushi boshiga qo'ndi* (The bird of happiness landed on their head).

II. Physiological Expressions (Somatisms)

Both languages use body parts (somatisms) to express happiness, but with different focal points.

- Heart (Yurak/Ko'ngil): In both languages, the heart is the center of emotion, but Uzbek often uses *ko'ngil* (inner soul/heart) to describe happiness, while English often uses "heart" for affection or "spirits" for mood.
- Face/Smile (Og'iz/Kulg):
 - *English*: "Grin from ear to ear," "All smiles".
 - *Uzbek*: *Og'zi qulog'iga yetmoq* (His mouth reached his ears), *Og'zining tanobi qochmoq* (Mouth corners wide).
- Body Content/Fluidity:
 - *English*: "Bursting with joy."
 - *Uzbek*: *Ichiga sig'may ketmoq* (Cannot fit inside oneself), *Terisiga sig'may ketmoq* (Cannot fit in one's skin—a common idiomatic expression for extreme joy).

III. Translation Challenges and Differences

1. Cultural Contextualization of "Baxt": In Uzbek, *baxt* often encompasses luck, destiny, and family harmony (e.g., *oilaning baxti* – family's happiness). In contrast, English "happiness" usually refers to an internal, personal, and emotional state.
2. Nature vs. Spatial Imagery: Translating Uzbek nature-based idioms (e.g., *qalbida bahor* – spring in the heart) into English often loses the poetic, agricultural, or Sufi-influenced connection, making them sound cliché or nonsensical.
3. Intensity Levels: Uzbek distinguishes between *baxt* (deep happiness/fortune), *quvonch* (joy), and *xursandchilik* (merrymaking/good mood), which may all be translated simply as "happy" in English.
4. Literal vs. Figurative Loss: A literal translation of "On cloud nine" into Uzbek (*to'qqizinchi bulutda*) carries no idiomatic weight, and translating *Ko'ngli tog'day bo'lish* directly to "His heart became like a mountain" in English implies a burden rather than joy.

Summary Table of Differences

Feature	English	Uzbek
Primary Metaphor	Upward/Spatial ("On top of...")	Nature/Inner State ("Blooming...")
Focus	Individualistic	Collective/Family
Happiness Center	Head/Heart (Abstract)	Heart/Inner Self (<i>Ko'ngil</i>)
Key Idiom Example	"Over the moon"	<i>Ichiga sig'may ketmoq</i>

3. Cultural Value Frameworks

Translating the concept of "happiness" between English and Uzbek presents significant challenges due to divergent cultural value frameworks, moving from a primarily individualistic/hedonic view in English to a collectivistic/communal view in Uzbek. While both languages acknowledge happiness as a positive emotional state, the lexical, metaphorical, and cultural components are shaped by distinct societal, religious, and historical contexts.

- English: Individualism and Personal Fulfillment (Hedonia/Eudaimonia)
 - Focus: Happiness is often viewed as an internal emotional state, focusing on personal joy, pleasure, satisfaction, and self-actualization.

- Context: Influenced by Western, industrial, and urbanized values, where the "pursuit of happiness" is a personal right and goal.
- Expression: Tends to be direct, with a broad lexical range to distinguish subtle variations (e.g., joy, bliss, contentment, delight).
- Uzbek: Collectivism, Fate, and Contentment (Qanoat/Baxt)
 - Focus: Happiness (*baxt*) is deeply rooted in social harmony, family relationships, and community well-being.
 - Context: Influenced by Islamic values, respect for elders, and a sense of "qanoat" (contentment/moderation), often associating happiness with fate and divine blessings.
 - Expression: Often indirect, emphasizing passive acceptance of fate or the joy derived from communal success (e.g., children's success = parents' happiness).

The English term "happiness" is primarily an emotional state, whereas the Uzbek *baxt* often encompasses luck, fate, and overall life success (fortune). *Baxt* is a broader, sometimes more fatalistic concept than the transient emotion of happiness. English speakers might say "I am happy," while Uzbek speakers are more likely to express happiness through more indirect, socially-oriented phrases or by acknowledging the role of fortune (e.g., "Baxt menga nasib etdi" - Happiness was bestowed upon me). Uzbek often uses specific, sometimes borrowed words for different shades of pleasure (e.g., *quvonch* - joy, *rohat* - pleasure, *xursandchilik* - merrymaking) that may not fully capture the nuance of English terms like "bliss" or "contentment".

Strategies for Translation

- Contextual Adaptation: Translators must consider whether "happiness" refers to a brief moment of joy (*quvonch*), a state of life (*baxt*), or material satisfaction.
- Using Idiomatic Equivalents: Instead of literal translation, finding equivalent proverbs that reflect the target culture's values is crucial (e.g., translating a "personal success" idiom into an "honorable family" equivalent).
- Incorporating Spiritual Context: In Uzbek, acknowledging the spiritual or communal, rather than just the personal, is sometimes necessary to convey the full weight of *baxt*.

Comparing the concept of "happiness" in English and Uzbek reveals a fascinating tug-of-war between Western Individualism and Central Asian Collectivism. While English often treats happiness as a psychological state or an attainable goal, Uzbek views it through the lens of fate, family, and spiritual alignment.

The English word "happiness" is broad and versatile. In Uzbek, the translation depends entirely on the *source* of the joy:

Uzbek Term	Nuance / Cultural Root	Nearest English Equivalent
Baxt	Derived from Persian; implies destiny, luck, and long-term fortune.	Bliss / Fortune / Success
Xursandchilik	A situational, momentary state of being pleased.	Gladness / Cheerfulness
Shodlik	An outward, often communal expression of joy (e.g., at a wedding).	Rejoicing / Jubilation
Saodat	Deep, spiritual, or eternal prosperity (often religious).	Felicity / Divine Grace

There are some keys of cultural framework challenges:

- Individualism and Collectivism
 - English (Individualist): Happiness is often viewed as a personal right and an internal emotional state. "I want to be happy" focuses on self-actualization.

- Uzbek (Collectivist): Happiness is interdependent. An Uzbek speaker rarely feels *baxtli* (happy) if their family is struggling or if they are socially isolated.
- Translation Challenge: Translating "pursuit of happiness" into Uzbek as "*baxtga intilish*" can sound selfish or overly philosophical. In Uzbek, happiness is often found through fulfilling social roles (being a good child, parent, or neighbor) rather than pursued as an individual trophy.
- High-Context vs. Low-Context
 - English (Low-Context): Meanings are explicit. If someone says "I'm happy," they are describing their current mood.
 - Uzbek (High-Context): Meaning is embedded in social harmony. The phrase "*Rahmat, baxtli bo'ling*" (Thank you, be happy) is a standard formulaic blessing.
 - Translation Challenge: A translator must decide if "happiness" in a text is a literal emotion or a social ritual. Translating a standard English "I'm happy for you" into Uzbek often requires more "weighty" language to sound sincere, like "*Xursandman*" (I am glad) or even a prayer-like blessing.
- Masculinity vs. Femininity (Nurture vs. Achievement)
 - English (Often Achievement-Oriented): Happiness is frequently linked to "success," "getting what you want," or "productivity."
 - Uzbek (Nurture/Social Cohesion): Happiness is synonymous with "*Baraka*" (blessing/abundance) and "*Tinchlik*" (peace/tranquility).
 - Translation Challenge: For an Uzbek speaker, the absence of conflict (*tinchlik*) is a prerequisite for happiness. An English speaker might be "happy" despite a chaotic life; an Uzbek speaker would rarely use the word *baxt* in a chaotic environment.

In English, there is a strong sense of agency: "You make your own happiness." In Uzbek culture, there is a stronger leaning toward "External Locus of Control (Destiny)". The word *Baxt* is etymologically linked to "lot" or "portion."

- English: "I am happy." (Active state)
- Uzbek: "*Baxtim kuldi.*" (My happiness smiled—meaning, I got lucky/blessed).

This makes translating self-help literature particularly difficult. Phrases like "choose happiness" don't translate well into Uzbek because happiness is often seen as something bestowed by God, fate, or the community's well-wishes.

To translate "happiness" effectively between these two languages, one must look past the dictionary:

1. Contextual Substitution: Use *xursandchilik* for daily news and *baxt* for life-changing events (marriage, children).
2. Emotional Equivalence: Recognize that for an Uzbek, "peace in the home" (*oilaviy tinchlik*) is the functional equivalent of the English "personal happiness."
3. Honorifics and Blessings: In Uzbek, happiness is a shared wish. When translating, adding a "willingness of God" (*Xudo xohlasa*) or a blessing often makes the concept of happiness feel more "natural" to a native ear.

Conclusion

The concept of "happiness" is not a universal constant but a culturally molded experience. The English concept is more fluid and focused on the "self," while the Uzbek concept is more stable and focused on "fate and family." For a translation to be successful, it must respect these boundaries. Translators must be linguists and anthropologists simultaneously, ensuring that the emotional resonance of the source text is preserved in the target culture's unique conceptual framework.

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