

PROBLEMS OF COMPILING A BILINGUAL RUSSIAN–UZBEK IDEOGRAPHICAL (SEMANTICAL) DICTIONARY

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Annotation: This article explores theoretical and practical challenges in compiling a bilingual Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary. Unlike alphabetical dictionaries, it classifies words by semantic fields, highlighting issues such as semantic asymmetry, polysemy, and cultural specificity. The study shows that many concepts lack direct equivalents due to linguistic and cultural differences. Russian often has finer lexical distinctions in certain domains, while Uzbek includes culture-bound terms without Russian counterparts. Addressing these asymmetries requires explanatory notes, cross-referencing, and ethnolinguistic commentary. The creation of such a dictionary would combine European semantic models with Uzbek cultural categories and is valuable for comparative linguistics, translation, bilingual education, and cultural preservation.

Keywords: bilingual lexicography, ideographical dictionary, Russian–Uzbek, semantic fields, cultural specificity.

Introduction

The compilation of bilingual ideographical (semantic) dictionaries presents a number of theoretical and practical challenges. Unlike alphabetical dictionaries, which primarily arrange lexical units based on their formal spelling, ideographical dictionaries classify words and expressions according to semantic fields and conceptual categories. Such dictionaries aim not only to provide equivalents between languages, but also to reflect the structure of human knowledge, worldview, and cultural perception encoded in vocabulary.

For Russian and Uzbek, the task becomes particularly complex. These languages belong to different language families—Russian to the Slavic branch of the Indo-European family, and Uzbek to the Turkic family—and they differ significantly in their lexical systems, grammatical structures, and cultural-historical backgrounds. Consequently, establishing semantic correspondences requires more than a simple word-for-word translation; it demands a thorough analysis of cultural semantics, pragmatic usage, and the conceptual worldview underlying each language.

The importance of bilingual ideographical dictionaries lies in their ability to serve multiple disciplines. For linguistics, they provide material for contrastive and typological studies of semantic systems. For lexicography and translation studies, they offer practical tools for translators, interpreters, and language learners who seek not only direct equivalents but also conceptual mappings between two linguistic systems. Moreover, such resources are invaluable for intercultural communication, as they reveal both commonalities and unique features of national worldviews.

Despite these advantages, the compilation of a Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary faces several problems. Among them are the absence of one-to-one lexical equivalents, differences in semantic field boundaries, variation in metaphorical extensions of meaning, and the lack of uniform classification models that can capture both Slavic and Turkic lexical structures. Additionally, socio-cultural realities encoded in phraseology, proverbs, and culturally marked vocabulary often resist straightforward categorization or translation.

This paper aims to identify and analyze the major theoretical and practical problems in compiling a Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary and to propose possible solutions. Particular attention will be paid to methods of semantic field classification, strategies for dealing with non-equivalent lexicon, and approaches for incorporating culture-specific concepts. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the development of bilingual lexicography and to enhance the prospects for intercultural understanding between Russian and Uzbek linguistic communities.

Methods

The present research employs comparative and descriptive linguistic methods in order to analyze the problems of compiling a Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary. These methods were chosen because they make it possible to identify similarities and differences in the lexical-semantic organization of two unrelated languages and to provide systematic explanations for translation asymmetries.

Firstly, semantic fields in Russian and Uzbek are analyzed on the basis of existing lexicographic sources. These include monolingual ideographical dictionaries (e.g., ideographical dictionaries of Russian and Uzbek), explanatory dictionaries, bilingual Russian–Uzbek dictionaries, and relevant terminological glossaries. Additionally, electronic corpora of both languages and collections of proverbs, idioms, and culturally marked expressions are consulted to broaden the empirical base and ensure the inclusion of actual usage.

Secondly, a contrastive analysis is applied to examine differences in lexical-semantic structures across the two languages. This involves identifying equivalent and non-equivalent units, determining cases of partial overlap, and classifying patterns of semantic divergence (e.g., broader/narrower meanings, different metaphorical extensions, or culturally specific lexical items). Componential analysis is also employed to break down word meanings into semantic features, which facilitates cross-linguistic comparison.

Thirdly, case studies of specific semantic fields are conducted to illustrate translation gaps and asymmetries. Particular attention is paid to culturally significant domains such as kinship terminology, nature and environment, emotions, and material culture. These fields are selected because they often contain lexical items that lack direct equivalents, thereby presenting challenges for lexicographers. The analysis of these domains provides concrete examples of semantic mismatches and strategies for overcoming them.

Finally, the study incorporates elements of cultural linguistics and cognitive semantics to account for worldview differences reflected in vocabulary. This approach allows for a more nuanced interpretation of how each language categorizes reality, and how these categorizations influence the structure of semantic fields.

Through the combination of comparative, descriptive, and case-based methods, the research ensures a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and practical issues involved in compiling a Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary.

Results

The comparative analysis of Russian and Uzbek lexical-semantic systems has revealed several key challenges in compiling a bilingual ideographical dictionary. These challenges highlight the deep structural and cultural divergences between the two languages and suggest the need for methodological adaptation in bilingual lexicography.

1. Semantic Asymmetry.

One of the most significant findings is the lack of one-to-one correspondences between lexical units in Russian and Uzbek. For instance, Russian possesses a highly developed lexical field for describing snow, with words such as *сугроб* ('snowdrift'), *ноющая* ('freshly fallen soft snow'),

and *наст* ('crusted snow'). Uzbek, by contrast, relies on a smaller set of general terms (*qor*, *qor bosmoq*), reflecting the lesser cultural and ecological relevance of snow in Central Asia. This asymmetry illustrates the role of environment and cultural experience in shaping semantic fields, and demonstrates why ideographical dictionaries cannot rely on direct lexical equivalence alone.

2. Polysemy and Homonymy.

Russian words frequently display high levels of polysemy, creating difficulties in mapping onto Uzbek. For example, *ключ* can mean both 'key (for a lock)' and 'spring (of water),' whereas Uzbek distinguishes between *kalit* ('key') and *bulok* ('spring'). Such cases require multiple entries or cross-referencing in the dictionary to prevent semantic distortion. Homonymy further complicates classification, since forms that look identical in one language may not overlap in meaning with their supposed equivalents in the other.

3. Cultural Specificity.

The analysis has also revealed the presence of culture-bound lexical items, particularly in Uzbek. Words such as *gap* ('traditional gathering') and *mahalla* ('neighborhood community') carry rich socio-cultural connotations that are difficult to match with Russian categories. Although Russian may provide descriptive translations (*собрание друзей*, *квартирный комитет*), these paraphrases lack the full cultural resonance of the original Uzbek terms. This finding underscores the need for dictionaries to include cultural notes or explanatory commentary alongside lexical equivalents.

4. Ideographic Classification.

Another challenge concerns the organization of semantic fields themselves. Russian ideographical dictionaries often follow European philosophical and linguistic traditions (e.g., classification into "Nature," "Human Being," "Society," "Abstract Relations"). Uzbek, however, reflects a different conceptual hierarchy, influenced by Turkic nomadic heritage and Islamic categories of knowledge. Reconciling these two systems to create a unified classification scheme is problematic, since prioritizing one risks marginalizing the other. This demonstrates the importance of adopting flexible, multi-layered classification frameworks in bilingual ideographical dictionaries.

5. Borrowings and Neologisms.

Finally, the treatment of internationalisms and modern lexical borrowings presents specific challenges. Many terms in Russian, such as *компьютер*, *интернет*, and *маркетинг*, have been borrowed into Uzbek. However, they are often adapted to Uzbek morphology and semantics, resulting in forms like *kompyuter*, *internet*, and *marketunг*. While these appear as equivalents, subtle shifts in usage (e.g., narrower or broader application) may occur. These items must therefore be carefully integrated into the semantic hierarchy, ensuring that their function in both languages is properly reflected.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the compilation of a Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary involves not only linguistic but also cultural and methodological challenges. The findings confirm that ideographical lexicography must go beyond equivalence and account for semantic asymmetry, cultural specificity, and divergent worldviews.

The analysis revealed five key challenges:

Challenge	Russian Example	Uzbek Example	Problem
Semantic asymmetry	<i>сузроб</i> , <i>нороша</i> , <i>наст</i>	<i>qor</i>	Russian has multiple snow terms; Uzbek generalizes.
Polysemy homonymy	& <i>ключ</i> = "key / spring"	<i>kalit</i> (only "key")	Multiple senses require separate entries.

Challenge	Russian Example	Uzbek Example	Problem
Cultural specificity	–	<i>mahalla, gap</i>	Uzbek culture-bound terms lack Russian equivalents.
Classification differences	European tradition	Turkic-Islamic worldview	Hierarchical mismatch in organizing semantic fields.
Borrowings & neologisms	<i>компьютер, интернет</i>	<i>kompyuter, internet</i>	Uzbek borrows but adapts morphologically.

Discussion

The identified problems highlight the inherent complexity of bilingual ideographical lexicography, especially when the languages in question belong to different families and represent distinct cultural traditions. The findings suggest that a purely mechanical transfer of semantic structures from Russian to Uzbek (or vice versa) is impossible; instead, dictionary-making must integrate linguistic, cultural, and cognitive perspectives.

Addressing Semantic Asymmetry.

The problem of asymmetry between Russian and Uzbek lexicons demonstrates that many cultural concepts are not universally shared. To address this, explanatory notes and descriptive definitions should be used when direct lexical equivalents are unavailable. For example, Russian *наст* ('crusted snow') could be explained in Uzbek through a paraphrase (*ustki qavati muzlagan qor*). Similarly, Uzbek *gap* ('traditional gathering') requires a cultural annotation rather than a simple Russian equivalent (*вечеринка* or *собрание*), since such translations fail to capture its social and cultural functions. In this way, the dictionary can preserve semantic nuance while avoiding misleading equivalences.

Managing Polysemy and Homonymy.

Polysemous Russian words often split into multiple distinct lexemes in Uzbek. A practical solution is to employ cross-referencing and multiple sense entries, accompanied by contextual examples. For instance, the Russian *ключ* ('key'/'spring') would appear under separate headings, each linked to its Uzbek equivalent (*kalit* / *bulok*). This method ensures clarity for users and reflects the actual semantic organization of each language.

Representing Cultural Specificity.

Culture-bound words are best handled through ethnolinguistic commentary. This approach situates lexical items within their cultural context, helping users understand both the literal and connotative meanings. For example, *mahalla* should not only be translated as 'neighborhood' but also explained as a socio-political institution central to Uzbek communal life. Such commentary transforms the dictionary into a tool not only of translation but also of cultural education.

Developing a Hybrid Classification Model.

A significant methodological implication concerns ideographical classification. Russian dictionaries tend to follow European Enlightenment traditions of categorization, while Uzbek conceptual systems reflect Turkic and Islamic epistemologies. To reconcile these differences, a hybrid classification model is necessary—one that maintains the universality of basic categories such as "Nature," "Human Being," and "Society," but also incorporates culture-specific domains (e.g., kinship, hospitality, spiritual life). Such a model would enable more accurate mapping across languages without erasing cultural distinctiveness.

Consistent Treatment of Borrowings and Neologisms.

Borrowed words and internationalisms require careful treatment. Since both Russian and Uzbek

are currently experiencing rapid lexical expansion due to globalization and technological progress, a consistent policy should be adopted to reflect real usage. For instance, *компьютер* and *kompyuter* may be treated as parallel entries, but any semantic shifts in Uzbek usage (e.g., broader application to include smartphones) should be noted. This ensures that the dictionary remains a reliable resource for contemporary communication.

Theoretical and Practical Implications.

The creation of a Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary carries significant theoretical and practical benefits. From a theoretical perspective, it contributes to comparative and contrastive linguistics, cognitive semantics, and lexicography by illustrating how languages categorize the world differently. From a practical standpoint, it supports translation, bilingual education, and lexicographic practice. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in cultural preservation, documenting lexical fields that embody unique aspects of national heritage.

Collaborative and Interdisciplinary Approaches.

Finally, the study emphasizes that such a dictionary cannot be compiled by linguists alone. It requires the collaboration of lexicographers, cultural anthropologists, translators, and educators. Only through interdisciplinary cooperation can both linguistic precision and cultural depth be achieved. Furthermore, digital lexicography and corpus-based methods should be integrated into the project to ensure accessibility and long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that compiling a bilingual Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary is a highly complex task, influenced by multiple linguistic and cultural factors. The key challenges include semantic asymmetry, polysemy, cultural specificity, differences in ideographical classification traditions, and the treatment of borrowings and neologisms. Each of these issues underscores the fact that lexical equivalence across unrelated languages cannot be achieved through simple translation; instead, it requires a nuanced methodology that integrates linguistic, cultural, and cognitive perspectives. By applying comparative analysis, contrastive semantics, and case studies of specific lexical domains, this research has shown that many of these challenges can be addressed through systematic strategies. Explanatory notes and descriptive definitions provide solutions for semantic gaps, cross-referencing helps to manage polysemy, and ethnolinguistic commentary ensures the preservation of cultural meanings. Moreover, the proposal of a hybrid classification model—combining European semantic hierarchies with Uzbek traditional categories—offers a workable framework for reconciling divergent worldviews in bilingual lexicography. The theoretical significance of this study lies in its contribution to comparative and cognitive linguistics, lexicology, and the theory of bilingual lexicography. Practically, the development of a Russian–Uzbek ideographical dictionary would support translation, bilingual education, intercultural communication, and cultural preservation. It would provide translators and language learners with not only lexical equivalents but also insights into how Russian and Uzbek speakers conceptualize reality. At the same time, the study highlights the need for interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches. The compilation of such a dictionary should involve not only linguists and lexicographers but also cultural anthropologists, educators, and specialists in digital lexicography. Modern technologies, including electronic corpora, database management, and digital platforms, can play a crucial role in ensuring the accessibility, adaptability, and long-term sustainability of the resource.

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