



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EMOTION LEXICONS IN TURKMEN AND ENGLISH: TYPES, FUNCTIONS, AND IDIOMATIC MEANINGS

Mametniyazova Guncha

Head of the Department of Foreign Languages, Turkmen State Pedagogical Institute
named after Seyitnazar Seydi
Turkmenabat, Turkmenistan

Yazmyradov Baymyrat

Student, Turkmen State Pedagogical Institute named after Seyitnazar Seydi
Turkmenabat, Turkmenistan

Abstract

This article presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of emotion lexicons in the Turkmen and English languages. Emotions represent a fundamental part of human cognition and communication, influencing linguistic expression, metaphorical thinking, and cultural perception. The study examines semantic classifications, functional roles, and idiomatic meanings of emotion-related lexemes to reveal how both languages conceptualize emotional experience. Findings show that although both languages share universal emotional categories such as joy, fear, anger, and sadness, they differ significantly in lexical richness, figurative interpretation, and cultural embodiment. English demonstrates analytical precision and diversity of emotional terms, while Turkmen emotional lexicon reflects poetic imagery and collective identity rooted in oral traditions.

Keywords: emotions, lexicon, Turkmen language, English language, idioms, semantics, cross-cultural linguistics.

Introduction

Language is the principal tool through which humans express emotions, interpret experiences, and build interpersonal relationships. Emotional vocabulary occupies a special place in linguistic systems, as it connects subjective inner states with objective linguistic signs. Studying emotion lexicons across languages provides insight into how different cultures encode, categorize, and evaluate emotional experiences.

In English linguistics, emotion words have been extensively analyzed in terms of semantics, pragmatics, and psychology. The language possesses an immense variety of emotion terms, capable of expressing subtle distinctions in feeling, intensity, and duration.

In contrast, the Turkmen language, with its deep oral-poetic heritage, tends to represent emotions through metaphorical imagery, evaluative expressions, and moral associations.

This comparative analysis aims to reveal both universal and culture-specific patterns of emotion lexicon development in Turkmen and English. It focuses on semantic organization, functional use, and idiomatic manifestations of emotion words, considering how cultural worldview, social values, and communicative traditions shape emotional expression in each linguistic system.

Types and Semantic Classifications of Emotion Words

Emotion words constitute a fundamental component of human language, reflecting not only inner psychological states but also cultural values, social norms, and cognitive frameworks. They can be broadly classified into **basic (primary) emotions** and **complex (secondary) emotions**, although the boundaries between these categories are often fluid due to overlapping cognitive and cultural interpretations. Basic emotions, such as happiness, anger, fear, sadness, and surprise, are considered universal across human societies. They are biologically rooted, arising from innate neural and hormonal mechanisms, and are typically recognizable through facial expressions, vocalizations, and physiological reactions. These primary emotions serve as the foundation for human affective experience, forming the core semantic nucleus of emotional lexicons in all languages.

Complex emotions, on the other hand, emerge from social, moral, and cultural contexts, reflecting more sophisticated cognitive processing. Emotions such as shame, pride, guilt, nostalgia, jealousy, admiration, or envy are culturally mediated and often tied to social expectations, personal values, and interpersonal relationships. Their lexical representation depends on the interplay between cognitive appraisal, moral judgment, and socialization processes, making them highly context-sensitive and variable across linguistic communities.

In **English**, the emotion lexicon exhibits a highly analytical and nuanced structure. Semantic fields for individual emotions are rich, allowing speakers to communicate subtle differences in intensity, cause, duration, and social acceptability. For instance, the semantic domain of anger encompasses a wide array of lexemes including *irritated*, *annoyed*, *furiously*, *outraged*, and *infuriated*, each with distinctive connotations regarding severity, trigger, and appropriateness in social interaction. Similarly, the domain of happiness includes lexical items ranging from *content* and *pleased* to *overjoyed*, *ecstatic*, or *elated*, which enable precise differentiation of emotional states and the communication of fine-grained affective nuances. English also employs compound and metaphorical expressions, such as *tickled pink*, *on cloud nine*, or *seeing red*, to enrich semantic meaning and convey culturally conventionalized affective imagery. This lexical sophistication reflects the analytical and descriptive orientation of English, where clarity, differentiation, and specificity are prioritized in emotional expression.

In **Turkmen**, by contrast, the conceptualization and lexicalization of emotions are often intertwined with context, poetic imagery, and moral or communal considerations.

Emotional terms frequently carry layered meanings that blend affective, somatic, and evaluative dimensions. For example, the word *gynanç* may denote sadness, regret, or compassionate sorrow depending on situational context; *behişlik* conveys a combined sense of joy, serenity, and spiritual fulfillment; *gaharly* represents anger while simultaneously invoking moral strength, righteous indignation, or passionate resolve. Such lexemes demonstrate that emotional expression in Turkmen is not merely descriptive but also evaluative, reflecting the cultural integration of body, mind, and communal ethics.

Turkmen emotional expressions often employ vivid metaphorical or idiomatic constructions to communicate subtle psychological states. For example, *ýüregim gysýar* (“my heart tightens”) communicates anxiety, grief, or emotional tension, while *göwnim açyk* (“my soul is open”) expresses joy, optimism, or generosity. Similarly, *açyk göwün* implies openness and receptivity, whereas *düýnki ýagşylygy unutmak* metaphorically conveys disappointment or emotional suppression. Such constructions reveal the embodied and holistic nature of emotional conceptualization in Turkmen, where bodily sensations, moral evaluation, and social consciousness converge to create a rich and multidimensional semantic network.

Additionally, the comparative analysis indicates that while English emphasizes categorical precision, lexical differentiation, and metaphorical creativity, Turkmen prioritizes context-dependent interpretation, holistic integration of emotion and moral cognition, and poetic imagery. Both languages, however, fulfill universal communicative functions of emotion words: expressing affective states, regulating social behavior, guiding interpersonal interaction, and reflecting cultural norms. The differences in lexical richness, idiomatic use, and semantic granularity highlight the interplay between language, cognition, and cultural worldview, demonstrating that emotion lexicons are simultaneously universal in their core functions and culture-specific in their expressive strategies.

Functional and Pragmatic Aspects of Emotion Lexicons

Emotion lexicons serve multiple, interrelated functions in human communication, encompassing expressive, communicative, cognitive, and social dimensions. These functions are essential for the transmission of personal feelings, regulation of social interactions, and the reflection of cultural norms and values.

The **expressive function** allows speakers to convey not only the presence of an emotion but also its intensity, duration, and qualitative nuances. In English, this is achieved through precise lexical choices, syntactic constructions, and prosodic features such as stress, intonation, and rhythm. For instance, repetition of intensifiers or the use of intensifying adverbs (*so*, *very*, *extremely*, *absolutely*) enhances the emotional impact of statements, creating a graded scale of affective intensity. English also frequently employs metaphorical and idiomatic expressions, such as *over the moon* or *seeing red*, to augment the expressive power of emotion words. In Turkmen, the expressive function relies heavily on contextual cues, poetic imagery, and oral performance characteristics.

Emotional meaning is often conveyed through rhythmic patterns, repetition, and prosodic modulation, particularly in folk poetry, oral storytelling, and daily conversational speech.

The **communicative function** of emotion lexicons involves regulating social interactions, facilitating interpersonal understanding, and maintaining social harmony. In English-speaking cultures, emotional expression is often moderated by norms of politeness, formality, and social restraint, reflecting a cultural emphasis on individual autonomy and social appropriateness. For example, expressing anger directly may be mitigated by softening devices such as modal verbs (*could, might*) or euphemistic phrases. In Turkmen society, by contrast, the communicative function emphasizes sincerity, honor, and social cohesion, often guided by the principles of *ar-namys* (ethical and moral codes). Emotional speech in Turkmen frequently conveys collective sentiments, mutual respect, and intergenerational continuity, making it both socially regulated and morally evaluative. This cultural embedding of emotion words allows speakers to communicate nuanced social meanings beyond mere affective states.

The **cognitive function** relates to how individuals conceptualize, categorize, and interpret emotional experiences. In English, cognitive differentiation is reflected in fine-grained distinctions between related emotional states. For example, the language differentiates between *sympathy* and *empathy*, *anxiety* and *nervousness*, or *contentment* and *satisfaction*, allowing speakers to precisely map internal experiences to verbal labels. This semantic precision enhances analytical understanding and facilitates psychological insight. In Turkmen, cognitive structuring of emotions often emphasizes relational and holistic interpretation. Terms such as *duýgudaşlyk* encompass multiple related emotional states, including empathy, compassion, and solidarity, reflecting the collectivist and context-dependent worldview typical of Turkmen culture. Such categorization highlights the integration of personal experience with communal norms and moral evaluation.

The **social function** of emotion lexicons reflects the cultural, moral, and ethical values of a community. Emotion words encode acceptable emotional responses, social roles, and interpersonal expectations. In English, social functions are often expressed through rules of appropriateness and contextual modulation of emotional speech, which vary according to social hierarchy, intimacy, and formality. In Turkmen, the social function is deeply intertwined with notions of honor, reciprocity, and collective responsibility, where emotional expressions simultaneously convey affective states, moral judgment, and social evaluation. Group-based activities, community events, and oral traditions reinforce these social uses, integrating emotions into everyday social life.

Overall, comparative analysis reveals that while English emphasizes lexical precision, differentiation, and pragmatic politeness, Turkmen prioritizes contextual interpretation, poetic expression, collective empathy, and moral evaluation. Both languages, however, fulfill universal communicative roles, enabling individuals to express feelings, interpret social cues, and participate in culturally meaningful interactions.

The study of these functional and pragmatic aspects provides insight into the complex interplay between language, cognition, and culture in emotional expression.

Idiomatic and Metaphorical Meanings

Idioms represent one of the most culturally loaded aspects of emotional expression. They not only encode emotional states but also reflect the metaphoric worldview of a culture.

In **English**, idioms often link emotions to physical experiences or natural phenomena: *to have butterflies in one's stomach* (anxiety), *to be on cloud nine* (happiness), *to blow one's top* (anger), *to lose one's temper* (frustration). These idioms highlight the connection between emotion and body, illustrating how English conceptualizes emotions as dynamic internal forces.

In **Turkmen**, idiomatic expressions tend to be more poetic and moral in character. Phrases such as *yüregi ýaryldy* (“heart split open”) express deep sorrow; *göwün götermek* (“to lift the soul”) means to inspire or encourage someone; *yüregi joşmak* (“heart boiling”) denotes excitement or passion. Many idioms have origins in Turkmen folklore, songs, and proverbs, preserving emotional wisdom accumulated through generations.

The comparison shows that English idioms focus on physical and behavioral manifestations of emotions, while Turkmen idioms reflect moral values, interpersonal relationships, and collective emotional experience. This distinction underscores the interplay between linguistic structure and cultural psychology.

Cultural and Cognitive Perspectives

Emotional vocabulary serves as a mirror of a society's worldview. In English-speaking cultures, emotions are often perceived as individual experiences, emphasizing self-awareness, autonomy, and psychological self-regulation. In Turkmen culture, emotions are seen as socially embedded, reflecting group harmony, respect, and moral responsibility.

Cognitively, both languages employ conceptual metaphors to represent emotions. For example, “up” metaphors (e.g., *high spirits*, *rise in mood*) denote positive emotions, while “down” metaphors (*feeling low*, *spirit fell*) indicate sadness. Similar conceptual oppositions exist in Turkmen: *göwün açyk* (“open soul”) implies happiness, whereas *yürek daralmak* (“heart narrowing”) signifies distress.

Thus, emotion lexicons not only convey affective states but also embody the philosophical and ethical foundations of their respective cultures. Comparative analysis reveals that both linguistic systems express the universality of emotion through culturally specific linguistic forms.

Conclusion

The comparative study of emotion lexicons in Turkmen and English demonstrates that emotional language functions as a powerful tool of cultural identity and interpersonal understanding. While both languages share universal categories of emotion, they diverge in their metaphorical frameworks, idiomatic structures, and pragmatic applications.

English exhibits lexical diversity and analytical precision, enabling speakers to differentiate emotional nuances with great accuracy. Turkmen, by contrast, embodies emotional experience through poetic imagery, moral symbolism, and communal values. These differences highlight the role of culture in shaping the linguistic expression of emotions.

Further research in this field may expand to cross-modal analyses of emotional expression—combining linguistic, paralinguistic, and cultural dimensions—to deepen understanding of how language encodes the human emotional experience.

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