

THE VERBALIZATION AND LINGUOCULTURAL STUDY OF THE
CONCEPT OF “CHILD” IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract: *The concept of child occupies a central position in all cultures as it reflects universal human values, social norms, and cultural traditions. This article examines the verbalization and linguocultural aspects of the concept of “child” in English and Uzbek. Through lexicographic analysis, cultural discourse, and phraseological expressions, the paper identifies similarities and differences in how the notion of childhood is represented in these two languages. The comparative study reveals that while the English concept emphasizes individuality, independence, and legal status, the Uzbek concept is closely linked with family values, respect for elders, and the continuity of cultural heritage.*

Keywords: *child, bola, concept, verbalization, linguoculturology, English, Uzbek*

The concept of *child* holds a special position in every society, as it represents universal human values such as love, care, protection, and continuity of generations. From a linguistic and cultural perspective, the verbalization of this concept reveals how different societies understand and embody the role of childhood in their worldviews. In modern linguistics, especially in cognitive and cultural approaches, concepts are understood not only as mental constructs but also as cultural codes reflected in language (Apresyan, 1995; Karasik, 2002). Thus, the study of the concept of “child” in English and Uzbek provides an opportunity to investigate both universal and culture-specific elements of language and culture.

In English, the lexeme *child* is defined as “a young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024). Merriam - Webster (2024) offers an additional explanation: “a son or daughter,” and metaphorically, “a product of a particular time, place, or influence, such as a child of the 1960s.” This shows that the English understanding of childhood is both biological and symbolic. The English lexicon contains several closely related terms such as *infant*, *minor*, *juvenile*, and *offspring*, each carrying distinct semantic and legal nuances. For example, *minor* refers to legal incapacity, *juvenile* often appears in criminological and legal discourse, and *infant* in law traditionally means a person under the age of majority. Such terminological diversity demonstrates that in English-speaking societies, the notion of child is strongly tied to individuality, rights, and institutional recognition.

In addition, phraseological expressions in English reflect the cultural associations of childhood. The idiom *child’s play* describes something simple and easy, indicating that children are associated with simplicity. On the other hand, *problem child* refers to a

difficult or rebellious child, while *golden child* highlights an idealized or privileged child. These idioms reveal how language encodes social evaluations of children and expectations about their behavior. English literature further emphasizes the symbolic role of the child: in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), Scout Finch represents innocence, moral growth, and the perspective of childhood as a lens to critique adult society. Similarly, in Dickens' novels, children often appear as vulnerable figures in need of protection, embodying the social issues of the Victorian era. Thus, in English discourse, the verbalization of *child* reflects a balance between innocence, individuality, and institutional categorization.

In Uzbek, the equivalent concept is expressed by the word *bola*, which denotes not only "a young human being" but also "offspring" in a wider cultural sense. The *O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati* (2006) defines *bola* as "kichkina inson, farzand," but in Uzbek cultural tradition this word extends far beyond the biological meaning. The notion of *bola* is closely tied to affection, belonging, and continuity. Expressions such as *ona-bola* (mother and child), *xalqning bolasi* (child of the nation), or *bola-chaqa* (children as a group) reflect both family and collective values. Phraseological units illustrate this more vividly. For example, the proverb *Bola aziz, odobi undan aziz* ("A child is dear, but manners are dearer") emphasizes moral education as central to raising a child. Another proverb, *Bola – xalqning kelajagi* ("A child is the future of the nation"), demonstrates how strongly the Uzbek worldview links children with national destiny. Rahmatullayev's (1982) collection of Uzbek phraseology shows that *bola* frequently symbolizes hope, dependence, and continuity of traditions. In daily speech, Uzbek people often use *bolajon* (dear child) as an affectionate diminutive, which again highlights the cultural emphasis on care and emotional closeness.

The comparison of English "*child*" and Uzbek "*bola*" demonstrates both shared universal elements and culturally specific features. Universally, both concepts refer to a young human being, embodying innocence and potential. However, culturally, the differences are significant. English discourse foregrounds individuality, legal status, and personal rights, while Uzbek discourse stresses collective identity, moral upbringing, and social responsibility. In English phraseology, metaphors such as *child of nature* or *child of fortune* indicate creativity, independence, or destiny, focusing on the individual as a unique being shaped by circumstances. In contrast, Uzbek metaphors such as *xalqning bolasi* highlight belonging to a community and responsibility before society. English legal discourse differentiates children with precise terms like *minor* and *juvenile*, reflecting institutional structures, whereas in Uzbek, legal terminology is less differentiated, with general use of *bola* or *voyaga yetmagan*. This shows that Anglo-American societies prioritize the institutional and legal dimensions of childhood, while Uzbek society emphasizes moral, familial, and cultural aspects.

From a linguocultural perspective, the analysis of these two concepts reveals how deeply cultural values are encoded in language. In English, the focus on individuality and rights reflects the Anglo-American cultural orientation toward personal freedom and independence. Childhood is conceptualized as a stage in which individuality develops

and legal frameworks protect minors as individuals. In Uzbek, the verbalization of *bola* reflects the collectivist values of Central Asian society, where family, community, and morality dominate social life. The child is not only a personal being but also a part of the family's honor and the nation's future. This cultural worldview is vividly embodied in Uzbek proverbs, literature, and oral tradition, where children are regarded as both a blessing and a responsibility.

The study of the verbalization of the concept of "child" in English and Uzbek thus illustrates the interplay of universal and culture-specific elements in linguistic representation. Both societies conceptualize children as symbols of hope and continuity, but English emphasizes independence and individuality, whereas Uzbek stresses moral upbringing and collective responsibility. This confirms Wierzbicka's (1997) view that key cultural concepts can only be fully understood in relation to their cultural contexts. It also supports Karasik's (2002) argument that concepts serve as cultural codes, shaping how people perceive the world around them. By analyzing how the notion of childhood is verbalized, we gain deeper insight into how language reflects and transmits cultural values.

The findings of this research contribute to linguocultural studies by demonstrating that even seemingly universal concepts such as *child* are encoded differently depending on cultural traditions. For English speakers, a child is an individual with rights, a subject of legal discourse, and a literary symbol of innocence or rebellion. For Uzbek speakers, a *bola* is first of all a family member, a moral being in the making, and a national treasure that embodies the community's future. This comparative perspective allows us to see not only the differences between languages but also the ways in which cultures converge on the shared human experience of raising children.

In conclusion, the verbalization and linguocultural study of the concept of "child" in English and Uzbek reveal that language is both a reflection of cultural worldview and a means of transmitting values across generations. The universality of childhood as a human experience coexists with cultural specificity in its linguistic representation. English foregrounds individuality, rights, and institutional perspectives, while Uzbek emphasizes family ties, moral values, and collective responsibility. This study shows that the analysis of concepts through linguoculturological methods provides valuable insights into the cultural and social dimensions of language, and it opens further avenues for research into legal, psychological, and literary conceptualizations of childhood across cultures.

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