



COMPARATIVE-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ROAD SIGN TERMINOLOGY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

Khushbaqova Nasiba Nurqobil qizi

Teacher at Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy

Abstract

This article presents a comparative analysis of the semantic, structural, and pragmatic characteristics of road traffic terminology in English and Uzbek. The study reveals that English terminology tends toward a geometric and descriptive nature, whereas the Uzbek language prioritizes functional and prescriptive approaches. The findings highlight the phenomena of linguistic economy and explication within the language systems as exemplified by road signs.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, road signs, terminology, linguistic economy, explication, pragmatics, English, Uzbek.

Introduction

In modern linguistics, the comparative study of terminological systems is crucial not only for linguistic purposes but also for uncovering cultural and cognitive differences. Although road traffic signs (RTS) are based on international standards (the Vienna Convention), their verbal expression (nomination) in each language is closely linked to the worldview, situational perception, and linguistic structure of that nation. Road sign terminology constitutes a specific type of discourse that facilitates communication between the driver and the road. The relevance of this study lies in the differing approaches to object nomination: in English, form (geometry) often prevails, while in Uzbek, content (function and risk level) takes precedence. The purpose of this research is to compare the principles of road sign formation in two different linguistic environments and identify the underlying linguistic reasons.



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The study of terminological systems is one of the most dynamic areas of modern linguistics. Road traffic terms are, by nature, both semiotic (sign systems) and linguistic (nominative). According to scholars such as D.S. Lotte and A.A. Reformatsky, a term differs from a common word by its precise denotative meaning and its limitation within a specific system. In road sign terminology, the process of nomination occurs through two methods: descriptive (describing the object's shape) and prescriptive (giving a command for action). While English linguistics prioritizes object-centered nomination, Uzbek terminology is dominated by a function-centered approach.

The principle of "Economy of Language", established by A. Martinet, is clearly manifested in English road signs. According to this principle, the language seeks to provide maximum information with minimum effort (e.g., Merge). Conversely, Uzbek terminological units often exhibit the phenomenon of "explication" (expanding the meaning). This serves to ensure the clarity (unambiguity) of the information provided to the driver and to enhance safety levels.

The terminological layer of every language reflects the cognitive world picture of its speakers. The naming of road signs is not merely a technical process but a product of perceiving spatial relationships. In English, road signs are often perceived as geometric symbols, while in Uzbek, they are formed as "social regulatory instructions." Although based on the Vienna Convention, the linguistic expressions are not fully symmetrical. Theoretically, this is known as cultural-linguistic adaptation, where an international concept (e.g., Keep Right) undergoes transformation according to the internal laws of the national language (Uzbek: To'siqni o'ngdan chetlab o'tish — Bypass the obstacle from the right). The analysis identified four main differences in the nomination of English and Uzbek road signs:

1. Geometric Description and Functional-Pragmatic Approach: In English, signs often describe the physical appearance of the object. For example, the term "Bend to right" emphasizes the geometric shape of the road. In Uzbek, this is rendered as "Xavfli burilish (o'ngga)" (Dangerous turn to the right). The English nomination is neutral and descriptive, while the Uzbek nomination introduces modality (warning) through the word "dangerous." Here, the essence of the situation (risk level) is more important for the driver than the mere shape.



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Dynamic Process vs. Static Construction: To express the merging of traffic flows, English uses “Merging Traffic from Left” (using a participle to show the flow of movement). In Uzbek, this is named “Tutashuv chapdan” (Junction from the left—using a noun for a static state). English focuses on the process of vehicles joining together (dynamics), whereas Uzbek emphasizes the physical junction point of the roads (statics). This demonstrates the verbal nature of English and the nominal character of Uzbek.

Linguistic Economy vs. Explication: The “Keep right” sign in English consists of only two words and is elliptical. In Uzbek, it is fully explained as “To‘siqni o‘ngdan chetlab o‘tish” (Bypass the obstacle from the right). English prioritizes the “Economy of language” principle: even if the context (the presence of an obstacle) is not explicitly stated, the driver understands it. Uzbek employs explication to provide the driver with a precise action algorithm (obstacle + bypass).

Generalization vs. Specification: In English, “Directional Arrow” is used as a general term. In Uzbek, such signs are often named with specific features, such as “Qizil rangda o‘ng tomonga burilish” (Turning right in red). English tends to generalize the category of the sign, whereas Uzbek specifies details such as color, direction, and function.

Conclusion

English road signs are predominantly descriptive and geometric in character. In contrast, Uzbek terminology is more prescriptive and functional. The Uzbek language strives to explain the situation to the driver explicitly, aiming to eliminate any ambiguity. English relies on short imperatives and context. While English utilizes verbs and adverbs (Keep, Merging) to express movement, Uzbek forms concepts through complex phrases and nominal structures (Chetlab o‘tish, Tutashuv). Ultimately, these differences in road sign terminology reflect the varying attitudes of the two languages toward linguistic economy and information encoding methods.



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