



PRAGMASEMANTIC STRUCTURE AND DISCURSIVE FUNCTIONALITY OF NON- STANDARD MENTAL-ACTIVITY VERBS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Abstract

This article investigates the pragmasemantic structure and discursive functionality of non-standard mental-activity verbs in Uzbek and English. Mental-activity verbs denote processes of thinking, knowing, understanding, remembering, doubting, guessing, realizing, and evaluating. While standard verbs such as think, know, understand, remember in English and o'ylamoq, bilmoq, tushunmoq, eslamoq in Uzbek have been widely discussed in traditional grammar and semantics, their colloquial, idiomatic, slang-like, and socially marked equivalents have received less systematic attention. The study focuses on English forms such as reckon, figure out, suss out, twig, clock, get it, wrap one's head around and Uzbek expressions such as kallasi yetmoq, fahmi yetmoq, miyasiga kirmoq, xayoliga kelmoq, bosh qotirmoq, aqliga sig'moq. Using comparative semantic, pragmatic, and discourse-analytic methods, the article demonstrates that such verbs and verb-like expressions do not merely name cognitive processes; they also express epistemic stance, speaker attitude, social identity, informality, solidarity, irony, mitigation, and evaluative positioning. The findings show that English tends to employ phrasal verbs, metaphorical extensions, and slang innovations, whereas Uzbek frequently relies on body-part phraseology, auxiliary verb constructions, and culturally grounded metaphorical models of mind.

Keywords: Mental-activity verbs; Uzbek; English; pragmasemantics; discourse functionality; colloquial verbs; substandard vocabulary; cognition; epistemic stance; hedging; phraseology; slang; informal discourse; pragmatic markers;



cognitive metaphor; comparative linguistics; discourse analysis; mental process; speaker attitude; social meaning.

Introduction

Mental activity is one of the most complex areas of linguistic representation because it belongs not to the visible external world but to the inner sphere of human cognition. Every language possesses lexical and grammatical means for expressing thinking, knowing, understanding, remembering, imagining, guessing, doubting, and evaluating. In English, this semantic field includes such standard verbs as think, know, understand, remember, realize, suppose, believe, and imagine. In Uzbek, it includes o‘ylamoq, bilmoq, tushunmoq, anglamoq, eslamoq, fahmlamoq, tasavvur qilmoq, and xayol qilmoq. In traditional semantic classifications, such verbs are usually described as mental, cognitive, intellectual, or psychological verbs. In systemic-functional linguistics, mental processes are often divided into cognition, perception, emotion, and desire; cognitive verbs specifically cover processes of thinking, knowing, and understanding. Uzbek linguistic descriptions also classify verbs semantically and identify aqliy faoliyat fe’llari such as o‘ylamoq and fikrlamoq as a separate group.

However, human thought is not expressed only through neutral and standard vocabulary. In real communication, speakers often prefer informal, expressive, metaphorical, humorous, slang-like, or socially marked forms. English speakers may say I reckon, I figured it out, I finally got it, He clocked what was going on, or She sussed out the problem. Uzbek speakers may say kallam yetmadi, miyanga kirmadi, endi fahmim yetdi, xayolinga kelmabdi, boshim qotdi, or aqlimga sig‘mayapti. These forms are especially important in everyday speech, social media discourse, youth communication, fictional dialogue, interviews, online comments, and informal academic conversation. They belong to the broad layer of non-standard or substandard vocabulary, which includes colloquial words, slang, jargon, vulgarisms, and expressive phraseological units; such vocabulary often carries emotional, stylistic, social, and pragmatic meaning in addition to its lexical meaning.

The term substandard in this article is not used in the sense of “incorrect” or “inferior.” Rather, it refers to forms that stand outside formal literary norms or



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neutral academic style. These forms may be colloquial, dialectal, slang-like, idiomatic, socially restricted, or stylistically marked. They may be perfectly natural and communicatively effective in informal contexts, although they are usually avoided in highly formal writing. Therefore, the more precise term used in this article is non-standard mental-activity verbs and verb-like expressions.

The relevance of the topic is determined by three factors. First, mental-activity verbs are central to the representation of human consciousness in language. They encode the speaker's intellectual operations and the speaker's attitude toward knowledge. Secondly, non-standard forms reveal how cognition is conceptualized metaphorically and culturally. For example, English often conceptualizes understanding as getting, seeing, grasping, figuring out, or wrapping one's head around something. Uzbek often conceptualizes thought through body-part nouns such as *bosh* "head," *kalla* "head/mind," *miya* "brain," *aql* "reason," *fahm* "understanding," and *xayol* "imagination/thought." Thirdly, these verbs have important discourse functions: they can soften disagreement, mark uncertainty, create solidarity, express surprise, show irony, introduce evaluation, or signal the speaker's cognitive involvement in the topic.

The study of such verbs requires a pragmasemantic approach. Semantics explains the conceptual meaning of the verb: whether it denotes thinking, guessing, realizing, remembering, misunderstanding, or mental effort. Pragmatics explains how the same verb functions in a concrete communicative situation. For instance, *I think* may denote a cognitive process, but in discourse it often functions as a hedge, reducing categorical force. Similarly, *I reckon* can mean "I believe" or "I suppose," but it also indexes informality, personal judgment, and sometimes regional or conversational style. In recent work on pragmatic markers, forms such as *I think*, *I guess*, and *I suppose* are treated not merely as lexical verbs but as discourse devices that express stance and manage interaction.

Therefore, this article aims to explore the pragmasemantic structure and discursive functionality of non-standard mental-activity verbs in Uzbek and English. The main objectives are: to identify the semantic groups of such verbs; to describe their pragmatic meanings; to compare their structural realization in both languages; to reveal their discourse functions; and to determine their role in



expressing speaker identity, informality, epistemic stance, and communicative strategy.

Methods

The research is based on a qualitative comparative design combining semantic field analysis, pragmatic interpretation, discourse analysis, and contrastive linguistic description. Since the topic concerns both lexical meaning and contextual function, a purely grammatical or purely lexical approach would be insufficient. Mental-activity verbs are not only dictionary units; they are also discourse tools that acquire additional meaning in actual communication. For this reason, the article adopts an integrated methodological framework.

The first method is semantic field analysis. The verbs and verb-like expressions under investigation are grouped according to the type of mental activity they denote. The main semantic groups include: thinking and reasoning, understanding and realization, guessing and supposition, remembering and forgetting, imagining, mental difficulty, intellectual evaluation, and cognitive failure. English examples include reckon, figure out, work out, suss out, twig, clock, get it, guess, blank, space out, and wrap one's head around. Uzbek examples include o'ylab ko'rmoq, fahmi yetmoq, kallasi yetmoq, miyasiga kirmoq, xayoliga kelmoq, bosh qotirmoq, esidan chiqmoq, aqliga sig'moq, and o'yga botmoq. Standard verbs are included only as reference points, because the main focus is on colloquial, idiomatic, metaphorical, and socially marked variants.

The second method is componential semantic analysis. Each lexical item is examined according to several semantic components: cognitive process, degree of certainty, degree of effort, suddenness of realization, emotional coloring, informality, evaluative force, and interpersonal effect. For example, English figure out includes the components "mental effort," "problem-solving," and "successful understanding." Suss out includes "investigation," "practical intelligence," and "informality." Uzbek bosh qotirmoq contains the components "mental effort," "difficulty," and "problem-oriented thinking." Miyasiga kirmoq literally suggests that information enters the brain, but pragmatically it often



means “to become understandable” or, in negative form, “not to be understood despite explanation.”

The third method is pragmatic analysis. The study examines how speakers use non-standard mental-activity verbs to perform communicative actions. These actions include hedging, softening disagreement, showing uncertainty, expressing surprise, creating humorous effect, marking solidarity, criticizing indirectly, and presenting personal opinion. For example, I reckon we should change the plan is less formal and less categorical than I believe we should change the plan. Uzbek *menimcha* is not a verb, but it belongs to the same pragmatic field as *deb o‘ylayman* and can soften a claim. Similarly, *kallam yetmadi* may function not only as a statement of non-understanding but also as a polite way of asking for clarification.

The fourth method is discourse-functional analysis. The verbs are studied within discourse roles rather than isolated sentences. Attention is paid to their position in utterances, their relation to turn-taking, their function in narrative development, and their role in argumentation. In narratives, verbs of realization often mark a turning point: Then I figured out the truth; *Shunda xayolinga keldi*. In discussions, verbs of supposition help speakers avoid direct confrontation: I guess that may not work; *O‘ylashimcha, bu usul uncha mos emas*. In online discourse, colloquial mental verbs may create a conversational tone and reduce social distance between participants.

The fifth method is contrastive analysis. English and Uzbek are compared in terms of structural patterns, metaphorical models, and pragmatic preferences. English frequently forms non-standard cognitive meanings through phrasal verbs and metaphorical extensions of physical action verbs: *get, catch, grasp, see, figure out, work out, pick up, clock, and twig*. Uzbek often uses compound or phraseological structures involving nouns that denote mental organs or mental faculties: *bosh, kalla, miya, aql, fahm, and xayol*. These nouns combine with verbs such as *yetmoq, kirmoq, chiqmoq, qotmoq, sig‘moq, kelmoq, and solmoq*.



As a result, Uzbek non-standard mental expressions often have a vivid embodied metaphorical structure.

The sixth method is lexicographic and theoretical reference analysis. The Uzbek examples are interpreted with reference to Uzbek lexicographic and grammatical traditions, including the explanatory dictionary tradition represented by O‘zbek tilining izohli lug‘ati, a five-volume dictionary containing more than 80,000 words and word combinations. English examples are interpreted through semantic and pragmatic theories of verb classes, cognitive metaphor, discourse markers, and colloquial vocabulary. Levin’s approach to English verb classes is useful because it shows that verb meaning is closely connected with syntactic behavior and argument structure.

The seventh method is illustrative discourse modelling. Since the aim of this article is to provide a theoretical and analytical foundation, examples are selected and normalized as representative patterns of informal discourse. They are not presented as statistical corpus evidence. Instead, they function as linguistic illustrations demonstrating how pragmasemantic meanings operate in actual-like communicative contexts. For a future empirical study, the same framework may be applied to authentic corpora, including spoken interviews, social media comments, podcasts, fiction dialogue, classroom discourse, and bilingual translation data.

Results

The analysis reveals that non-standard mental-activity verbs in Uzbek and English form a rich pragmasemantic system. They differ from neutral cognitive verbs because they simultaneously encode mental process, speaker attitude, social style, emotional evaluation, and discourse function.

The first result concerns semantic stratification. In both languages, the verbs can be grouped into several semantic zones. The first zone is thinking and reasoning. English uses reckon, figure, think over, work out, and wrap one’s head around. Uzbek uses o‘ylab ko‘rmoq, bosh qotirmoq, kallani ishlatmoq, and aql yuritmoq.



The second zone is understanding and realization. English examples include get it, figure out, suss out, twig, and clock. Uzbek examples include fahmi yetmoq, kallasi yetmoq, miyasiga kirmoq, and xayoliga kelmoq. The third zone is guessing and supposition. English uses guess, reckon, and suppose in informal interaction. Uzbek often uses deb o‘ylamoq, chamalamoq, taxmin qilmoq, and non-verbal markers such as shekilli and menimcha. The fourth zone is mental failure or difficulty. English uses blank, space out, not get it, and can’t wrap one’s head around. Uzbek uses kallasi yetmaslik, miyasiga kirmaslik, esidan chiqmoq, and aqliga sig‘maslik.

The second result concerns metaphorical structure. English non-standard cognitive verbs frequently develop from physical or perceptual domains. Get originally denotes obtaining or receiving, but in I get it it means understanding. See denotes visual perception, but in I see what you mean it denotes comprehension. Grasp denotes holding with the hand, but in grasp an idea it denotes intellectual possession. Clock may mean noticing or recognizing, especially in informal British usage. Suss out suggests discovering something through practical reasoning. Thus, English often conceptualizes understanding as acquisition, vision, touch, or problem-solving.

Uzbek also relies strongly on metaphor, but the preferred source domains are often body, container, movement, and capacity. In miyasiga kirmadi “it did not enter his/her brain,” information is conceptualized as an object moving into a mental container. In aqliga sig‘madi “it did not fit into his/her reason,” understanding is conceptualized through spatial capacity. In kallasi yetdi “his/her head reached,” comprehension is represented as reaching a cognitive limit or target. In bosh qotirmoq “to make the head hard/frozen,” difficult thinking is represented as physical tension or pressure. These expressions show that Uzbek mental-activity phraseology is deeply embodied and culturally expressive.

The third result concerns pragmatic meaning. Non-standard mental verbs often indicate the speaker’s stance toward the truth of a statement. English I reckon and I guess reduce the force of an assertion. They show that the speaker is not presenting the claim as absolute knowledge but as personal judgment. Uzbek deb



o‘ylayman and menimcha perform a similar function, although menimcha is formally not a verb. For example, I reckon this method works better sounds more personal and conversational than This method works better. Uzbek Menimcha, bu usul yaxshiroq ishlaydi similarly softens the claim and leaves space for other opinions.

The fourth result concerns interpersonal function. Non-standard cognitive verbs create closeness and informality. In English, Did you get it? is simpler and more conversational than Did you understand it? In Uzbek, Tushundingizmi? is neutral, while kallangiz yetdimi? may sound humorous, informal, or rude depending on tone and relationship. This shows that pragmasemantic interpretation depends heavily on context, speaker relationship, intonation, and social hierarchy. A phrase that expresses friendly humor among peers may become face-threatening in teacher-student or official communication.

The fifth result concerns discursive functionality. In narratives, such verbs often mark a cognitive turning point. English: At first I was confused, but then I figured out what had happened. Uzbek: Avval tushunmadim, keyin xayolimga keldi. In argumentative discourse, they function as stance markers: I reckon the problem is not the method but the context. In explanatory discourse, they signal cognitive processing: Let me think it through. In conflict discourse, they can express criticism indirectly: He still doesn’t get it; Uning miyasiga kirmayapti. In humorous discourse, they exaggerate mental difficulty: I can’t wrap my head around this; Bunga boshim qotib qoldi.

The sixth result concerns structural differences. English non-standard mental verbs are often single lexical verbs or phrasal verbs: get, reckon, figure out, suss out, work out, space out. Uzbek frequently uses phraseological verb constructions consisting of noun + verb: bosh qotirmoq, xayoliga kelmoq, aqliga sig‘moq, fahmi yetmoq, miyasiga kirmoq. This difference reflects the typological nature of the languages. English has a strong phrasal-verb system, while Uzbek, as an agglutinative Turkic language, productively combines nominal roots, possessive markers, case markers, and auxiliary verbs to build complex meanings.



The seventh result concerns translation equivalence. Direct translation is often impossible because the pragmatic tone may change. English I reckon may be translated as *menimcha*, *o‘ylashimcha*, or *deb o‘ylayman*, depending on context. Uzbek *kallam yetmadi* may be translated as I didn’t get it, I couldn’t understand it, or I can’t figure it out. English *suss out* may correspond to *fahmlab olmoq* or *tagiga yetmoq*. Therefore, translation should preserve not only denotative meaning but also informality, emotional tone, social relation, and discourse function.

Discussion

The results show that non-standard mental-activity verbs occupy an important position at the intersection of semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and cognitive linguistics. They cannot be fully explained as simple synonyms of standard verbs. For example, *understand* and *get it* may refer to the same general cognitive process, but they differ in register, interpersonal meaning, and discourse effect. *Understand* is neutral and suitable for formal writing, while *get it* is conversational and socially closer. Similarly, Uzbek *tushunmoq* is neutral, whereas *miyasiga kirmoq* is more figurative and emotionally marked.

From a semantic perspective, these verbs show that mental activity is conceptualized through embodied experience. Finally, the topic is significant for discourse studies because mental-activity verbs often operate as bridges between inner cognition and social communication. They externalize private thought and transform it into a socially interpretable act. When a speaker says *I think*, *I guess*, *I figured out*, *kallam yetdi*, or *boshim qotdi*, they are not merely describing a mental state. They are managing knowledge, expressing attitude, negotiating interpersonal relations, and shaping discourse progression.

Conclusion

This article has examined the pragmasemantic structure and discursive functionality of non-standard mental-activity verbs in Uzbek and English. The analysis demonstrates that such verbs and verb-like expressions are complex linguistic units combining cognitive, pragmatic, stylistic, social, and cultural meanings. They denote mental operations such as thinking, understanding,



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guessing, remembering, realizing, and failing to understand, but at the same time they express speaker attitude, informality, emotional evaluation, epistemic stance, politeness, irony, and solidarity.

The comparison shows that English frequently realizes non-standard mental meanings through phrasal verbs, informal lexical verbs, and metaphorical extensions from physical action or perception. Forms such as get it, figure out, suss out, reckon, twig, and wrap one's head around are not merely informal substitutes for standard verbs; they carry distinctive discourse meanings. Uzbek, on the other hand, often employs phraseological constructions based on bosh, kalla, miya, aql, fahm, and xayol. Expressions such as kallasi yetmoq, miyasiga kirmoq, bosh qotirmoq, and aqliga sig'moq reveal an embodied and metaphorically rich representation of cognition.

The study confirms that pragmasemantic analysis is essential for understanding how mental verbs function in real discourse. A purely lexical approach cannot explain why I reckon sounds softer than I believe, why I don't get it sounds more conversational than I do not understand, or why Uzbek miyamga kirmadi may express both misunderstanding and emotional frustration. These meanings emerge from interaction, context, register, speaker intention, and cultural convention.

The findings are useful for comparative linguistics, translation studies, discourse analysis, lexicography, and language teaching. In translation, the main task is not literal equivalence but functional equivalence: the translator must preserve cognitive meaning, informality, emotional coloring, and interpersonal effect. In language teaching, learners should be exposed not only to standard verbs but also to colloquial and idiomatic cognitive expressions used in authentic communication.

Overall, non-standard mental-activity verbs show that language does not simply describe thought; it socially organizes thought. Through these verbs, speakers present knowledge, doubt, understanding, confusion, evaluation, and identity. Therefore, the study of such units deepens our understanding of the relationship between cognition, language, culture, and discourse.



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