
THE STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF THE CONCEPT OF MIDDLE AGE

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ANNOTATION

This article explores the linguistic and cultural representation of the concept of **middle age** in English and Uzbek languages. It analyzes how the term is defined, expressed, and perceived in both societies, focusing on lexical choices, metaphors, and cultural attitudes. While English often frames middle age as a period of transition or crisis, Uzbek language and culture tend to highlight it as a time of maturity, respect, and social responsibility. Through comparative analysis, the article reveals how language reflects deeper societal values regarding aging and life stages.

KEYWORDS: middle age, linguocultural concept, age perception, Uzbek language, English language, conceptual metaphor, cultural values, midlife, maturity

INTRODUCTION

The Level of Subjective Potential of a Linguocultural Concept refers to the degree to which linguistic knowledge is stored and actively maintained in an individual's consciousness. This level encompasses a wide range of potential meanings that a word may carry—far beyond what is formally encoded in dictionaries or standard language references. While the systemic potential of a concept includes numerous possible interpretations and associations, only a small portion of these are typically represented in conventional lexical definitions [1].

Importantly, the subjective potential is not something that can be fully observed or captured through standard linguistic analysis alone. It can only be reconstructed through experimental methods. Within the field of psycholinguistics, there are various approaches aimed at uncovering how speakers of different cultures mentally represent and process linguistic concepts. These approaches seek to identify the unique cognitive and cultural imagery that shapes an individual's understanding of language.

Among the most effective and insightful methods for exploring the subjective potential of both individual concepts and the broader conceptosphere (the total system of concepts within a culture) is the definitional experiment. This technique involves analyzing how individuals define or associate meanings with words, providing insight into their internal, culturally shaped conceptual structures. Definition is understood as a specific type of speech act — a

process in which the content of a concept is revealed, and the connection between a linguistic expression and what it denotes as a sign of language is established and clarified. A definition is regarded as a method by which a subject seeks to identify, specify, or clarify the meaning of a linguistic sign, or to expand the language by introducing a new sign expression. In doing so, both classificatory and interpretative features of the defined object are considered.

In the English language, there are various ways to refer to the concepts of «youth», «juvenility», «adolescence», and «old age» or «senility.» American respondents were presented with all these variants in order to identify the differences in meaning between them.

MAIN PART

The concept of middle age is a culturally and linguistically rich construct that reflects societal attitudes toward aging, maturity, and social roles. Although it generally refers to the period between youth and old age, its perception and expression vary across languages and cultures. This article explores how the concept of middle age is structured and represented in both English and Uzbek, focusing on linguistic, cultural, and psychological aspects.

In English, «middle age» typically refers to the period between ages 40 and 60, characterized by stability in career, family responsibilities, and physical or emotional transitions. Common associated terms include midlife crisis, middle-aged spread (weight gain), prime of life, and settling down. In contrast, in Uzbek, the equivalent term is «oʻrta yosh», which is used to describe a similar life stage but often carries more neutral or even respectful connotations, such as oʻrta yoshli inson (middle-aged person), pishgan yosh (mature age), and hayotning barakali davri (the fruitful period of life). While English sometimes associates middle age with decline or crisis (e.g., «midlife crisis»), Uzbek tends to emphasize maturity, responsibility, and social respectability. The lexical field around “middle age” in English is broad and includes both descriptive and evaluative terms. Descriptive expressions like middle-aged man/woman, midlife, and fortysomething provide factual information, while evaluative expressions like past your prime, still young at heart, and aging gracefully reflect societal attitudes. In Uzbek, expressions are more metaphorical and culturally rooted, such as yoshining qirqiga kirgan (entered the age of forty), qari emas, yosh ham emas (neither old nor young), and oʻrtacha yoshdagi inson (person of average age). These reveal a less medicalized and more culturally nuanced framing of age.

In Western culture, particularly in the United States and the UK, middle age is often portrayed as a time of reflection, restlessness, or transition. Media and psychological literature frequently refer to the «midlife crisis» as a period where individuals might question their life choices, pursue drastic changes, or seek self-fulfillment. This narrative includes stereotypical behaviors such as buying a sports car, changing careers, or ending long-term relationships. In Uzbek culture, however, middle age is viewed as a time when an individual has reached a social and

personal peak. It is associated with being a role model, having established a family and career, and contributing to the community. As such, middle age is more likely to be perceived as a period of stability, honor, and productivity rather than crisis.

Linguistic metaphors also reflect these cultural attitudes. In English, expressions like «over the hill», «life begins at 40», and «greying gracefully» reflect a mixture of concern, optimism, and acceptance around aging. In Uzbek, metaphorical expressions are more rooted in agricultural or natural imagery, suggesting growth and ripening: «O'rta yoshda odam yetiladigan daraxtga o'xshaydi» (a person in middle age is like a tree reaching full growth), «Yigitlik o'tadi, keksalik kutadi» (youth passes, old age awaits), and «Yoshi o'rta, aqli pishgan» (middle in age, but ripe in wisdom). These metaphors indicate that while both languages acknowledge the transitional nature of middle age, Uzbek leans toward a positive, wisdom-centered framing[2].

CONCLUSION.

The examination of the concept of **middle age** in English and Uzbek languages demonstrates how deeply language is intertwined with cultural outlooks on life stages. While both languages recognize this period as a transition between youth and old age, their approaches differ significantly. English often frames middle age through a lens of personal change, uncertainty, or decline—reflecting Western ideals of self-discovery and individual progress. In contrast, Uzbek portrays middle age as a time of fulfillment, social responsibility, and earned respect, highlighting communal values and life stability.

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