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**LEXICOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPT
“CHILD/BALA” IN ENGLISH AND KARAKALPAK:
A COGNITIVE-SEMANTIC AND LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS²⁹**

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the problem of insufficient comparative research on the lexicographic representation of the concept “Child/Bala” in English and Karakalpak. Despite extensive attention to conceptual analysis in cognitive linguistics, cross-linguistic differences in dictionary-based semantic structures remain underexplored, particularly in Turkic languages. The relevance of the research lies in its attempt to integrate lexicographic analysis with cognitive and linguacultural approaches in order to reveal both universal and culture-specific features of meaning. The study employs a qualitative methodology combining lexicographic, componential, comparative, and cognitive-semantic analysis. The data are drawn from authoritative English dictionaries and the from the book of “Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi”. The results demonstrate that the lexemes child and bala share a common semantic core referring to a young human being, reflecting a universal cognitive model. However, significant differences are observed in semantic extension: English exhibits broader metaphorical and abstract meanings, while Karakalpak retains stronger connections to kinship, lineage, and social identity. The findings confirm that dictionary definitions encode both linguistic and cultural knowledge.

KEYWORDS

Concept, lexicography, cognitive linguistics, linguacultural, semantic analysis, comparative linguistics.

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INGLIZ VA QORAQALPOQ TILLARIDA “CHILD/BALA” KONTSEPTINING LEKSIKOGRAFIK IFODALANISHI: KOGNITIV- SEMANTIK VA LINGVOKULTUROLOGIK TAHLIL

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ANNOTATSIYA	KALIT SO‘ZLAR
Mazkur maqola ingliz va qoraqalpoq tillarida “Child/Bala” konseptining leksikografik ifodalanishini qiyosiy jihatdan yetarli darajada o‘rganilmaganligi muammosiga bag‘ishlangan. Kognitiv lingvistika doirasida konseptual tahlilga sezilarli e‘tibor qaratilganiga qaramay, lug‘at ta‘riflarining semantic tuzilishidagi tillararo farqlar, ayniqsa turkey tillar misolida, hanuz yetarli darajada o‘rganilmagan. Tadqiqotning dolzarbligi leksikografik, kognitiv hamda lingvokulturologik yondashuvlarni integratsiyalash orqali ma‘no tarkibidagi universal va madaniy xos xususiyatlarni aniqlash zarurati bilan belgilanadi. Tadqiqotda sifatli metodologiya qo‘llanilib, leksikografik, komponential, qiyosiy va kognitiv-semantik tahlil usullari majmuaviy tarzda tatbiq etildi. Empirik material sifatida ingliz tilining nufuzli lug‘atlari hamda “Qoraqalpoq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi” asaridan olingan ma‘lumotlar xizmat qildi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko‘rsatdiki, child va bala leksemalari “yosh inson” tushunchasiga asoslangan umumiy semantic yadroni ifodalaydi va bu inson rivojlanishi tajribasiga asoslangan universal kognitiv modelni aks ettiradi. Shu bilan birga, semantic kengayishlarda muhim farqlar aniqlandi: ingliz tilida metaforik va abstrakt ma‘nolar kengroq rivojlangan bo‘lsa, qoraqalpoq tilida qarindoshlik, nasl va ijtimoiy identifikatsiya bilan bog‘liqlik ustunlik qiladi. Olingan natijalar lug‘at ta‘riflari nafaqat til tizimini, balki madaniy xususiyatlarni ham aks ettirishini tasdiqlaydi.	Kontsept, leksikografiya, kognitiv lingvistika, lingvokulturologiya, semantic tahlil, qiyosiy tilshunoslik.

ЛЕКСИКОГРАФИЧЕСКАЯ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ КОНЦЕПТА «CHILD/BALA» В АНГЛИЙСКОМ И КАРАКАЛПАКСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ: КОГНИТИВНО-СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЙ И ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ

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АННОТАЦИЯ	КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА
Данная статья посвящена проблеме недостаточной изученности в сравнительном аспекте лексикографического представления концепта “CHILD” в английском и каракалпакском языках. Несмотря на значительное внимание к концептуальному анализу в рамках когнитивной лингвистики, межъязыковые различия в семантической структуре словарных дефиниций остаются недостаточно исследованными, особенно в отношении тюркских языков. Актуальность исследования определяется необходимостью интеграции лексикографического, когнитивного и лингвокультурологического подходов для выявления универсальных и культурно-специфических характеристик значения. В работе используются качественные методы, в частности, лексикографический, компонентный, сравнительный и когнитивно-семантический анализ. Эмпирический материал получен из авторитетных английских словарей, а также из издания «Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi». Результаты исследования показывают, что лексемы child и bala выражают общее семантическое ядро, основу которого составляет компонент «молодой человек», что является отражением универсальной когнитивной модели, основанной на опыте человеческого развития. Вместе с тем были выявлены существенные различия в семантическом расширении: в английском языке более широко представлены метафорические и абстрактные значения, тогда как каракалпакский язык сохраняет более тесную связь с родством, генеалогией и социальной идентичностью. Полученные результаты подтверждают, что словарные дефиниции отражают не только языковую, но и культурную специфику.	Концепт, лексикография, когнитивная лингвистика, лингвокультурология, семантический анализ, сравнительная лингвистика.

INTRODUCTION

The study of linguistic concepts has become a central concern in contemporary Cognitive Linguistics and Linguoculturology, where language is viewed not merely as a system of signs but as a repository of cultural knowledge and collective experience. Within this paradigm, the concept *CHILD* represents a fundamental anthropocentric category, reflecting biological, social, and cultural dimensions of human existence. Previous research has demonstrated that lexical units encode not only denotative meanings but also culturally specific conceptualisations shaped by historical and social contexts (Lakoff., 1980, 3-6; Wierzbicka., 1992, 7-9). Despite the considerable attention given to conceptual analysis in linguistics, the lexicographic representation of the concept “*CHILD*” across different languages remains insufficiently explored, particularly in comparative perspectives involving Turkic languages. This gap is especially evident in studies comparing English and Karakalpak, where differences in cultural models, social structures, and linguistic categorisation strategies may lead to distinct semantic and cognitive interpretations of the same universal concept.

The relevance of the present study lies in its attempt to bridge lexicography, cognitive semantics, and cross-cultural analysis by examining how the concept “*CHILD*” is verbalised in authoritative dictionary sources of English and Karakalpak. The novelty of the research consists in its integrated methodological approach, combining lexicographic, componential, comparative, and cognitive-semantic analyses to reveal both universal and language-specific features of the concept.

The aim of the study is to identify and interpret the semantic structure of the lexemes “*child*” and “*bala*”, as well as to uncover the cognitive and linguocultural mechanisms underlying their usage. To achieve this aim, the following objectives are pursued: 1. to analyse dictionary definitions and identify core semantic components; 2. to classify these components into conceptual domains; 3. to compare the semantic structures across the two languages; and 4. to interpret the findings within a broader cognitive and cultural framework.

By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how fundamental human concepts are structured and encoded in language, offering insights into both universal patterns of cognition and culturally specific modes of conceptualisation.

METHODOLOGY

The present research adopts a qualitative, comparative, and cognitive-semantic approach to the analysis of the concept CHILD as represented in English and Karakalpak lexicographic sources. The study is based on the assumption that dictionary definitions constitute a reliable and structured reflection of lexical meaning, as well as a valuable source for uncovering underlying conceptual and cultural patterns.

The empirical data for the analysis were collected from authoritative lexicographic sources in both languages. For English, the material includes definitions from Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language (1828), Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, and the New Oxford Dictionary of English. For Karakalpak, the primary source is the "Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi", which provides comprehensive semantic descriptions of the lexeme bala and its related forms.

The methodological framework integrates several complementary methods: Lexicographic analysis, which involves the systematic examination and comparison of dictionary definitions in order to identify core meanings and semantic components;

Componential analysis, used to decompose lexical meanings into their fundamental semantic features (e.g., age, kinship, evaluation);

Comparative analysis, which enables the identification of similarities and differences between English and Karakalpak conceptualizations;

Cognitive-semantic analysis, aimed at interpreting figurative extensions and metaphorical meanings within broader conceptual frameworks;

Linguocultural interpretation, which focuses on the cultural and social significance of lexical meanings and their role in reflecting national worldview.

The analytical procedure consists of several stages. First, dictionary definitions of the lexemes *child* and *bala* are examined and categorized according to their semantic components. Second, these components are grouped into broader conceptual domains, such as biological development, kinship relations, figurative meanings, and metaphorical extensions. Third, a cross-linguistic comparison is conducted to identify universal and language-specific features. Finally, the findings are interpreted within the framework of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology in order to reveal deeper conceptual and cultural implications.

Such a multi-layered methodological approach ensures the reliability and depth of the analysis, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the concept CHILD as a linguocultural phenomenon.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cross-linguistic and lexicographic analysis offers a powerful approach for understanding the conceptual, cognitive, and cultural dimensions of a language. By examining the lexemes such as ***child***, ***bala*** and other lexemes related to this concept, this study reveals not only the core denotative meanings - age, developmental stage, and biological processes - but also culture-specific semantic extensions, including behavioral traits, social responsibilities, and evaluative nuances. Dictionaries, as repositories of lexical knowledge, serve both to codify these meanings and to reflect the societal attitudes, moral values, and cognitive frameworks inherent in each language community. Contrastive analysis thus enables researchers to identify semantic universals, language-specific divergences, and culturally embedded conceptualisations, providing a comprehensive perspective that bridges lexicography, cognitive linguistics, and sociocultural studies.

To explore these conceptual nuances in detail, the study first examines the lexical representation of the concept *child* in English. Table 1 presents definitions drawn from a range of authoritative dictionaries, including historical, learner-oriented, and collegiate sources:

Table 1.

Lexicographic Definitions of the Lexeme “Child” in English Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language (1828)	A son or daughter; a male or female descendant, in the first degree; applied chiefly to a person when young; also one weak in knowledge or experience; an infant; a descendant.
Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary	A young human who is not yet an adult; a son or daughter of any age.
Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary	A young person who is not yet an adult; someone's son or daughter, even when adult.
Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary	A young person especially between infancy and puberty; a person not yet of the age of majority; a son or daughter of human parents; a descendant; an unborn or recently born person, one strongly influenced by another or by a condition; product, result
New Oxford Dictionary of English (online)	A young human being below the age of puberty; a son or daughter of any age.

A cross-dictionary examination of English dictionaries—Noah Webster's American Dictionary (1828), Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, and the New Oxford Dictionary of English (online) reveals a coherent but multidimensional semantic structure for the lexeme child, reflecting both literal and figurative usage.

Across dictionaries, the primary denotation of child consistently refers to a young human being not yet fully grown or developed, typically from infancy through puberty (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: “*a young person especially*

between infancy and puberty"; Cambridge: *"a young person who is not yet an adult"*). This core semantic component captures biological and developmental aspects of the concept, emphasizing *physical immaturity and chronological youth*.

A second shared semantic component pertains to kinship or descendant status. Dictionaries highlight that child can refer to *a son or daughter, a descendant, or offspring of any age* (Oxford: *"a son or daughter of any age"*; Cambridge: *"someone's son or daughter, even when adult"*). This reflects an extended genealogical perspective, in which the lexeme denotes relational position within a family or lineage, independent of age. Historically, Webster (1828) also encodes this sense as *"a male or female descendant, in the first degree"*.

A third component relates to figurative and evaluative extensions:

Cognitive or experiential immaturity – Webster (1828) defines a child as *"one weak in knowledge or experience,"* which underscores *inexperience, naivete, or underdeveloped judgment*.

Susceptibility or influence – Merriam-Webster additionally notes a child as *"one strongly influenced by another or by a condition,"* capturing psychological or social dependence, malleability, and vulnerability with the example of *"... barbed wire ... is truly a child of the plains - W. P. Webb"*.

These figurative senses allow the lexeme child to function metaphorically, describing adult behaviour that resembles childhood traits, such as innocence, gullibility, or lack of practical understanding. Notably, this aligns with certain Karakalpak figurative uses of *"bala"* (Shagılmağan, shınıqpağan, jas), although English additionally emphasizes external influence, which is less prominent in Karakalpak.

Several modern dictionaries extend the lexical domain to prenatal and neonatal individuals. Merriam-Webster explicitly includes *"an unborn or recently born person"*, marking the lexeme's temporal and developmental flexibility. This reflects a subtle expansion from literal youth to pre-birth existence, conceptually overlapping with Karakalpak *hámile*, which denotes *"a living entity newly formed in the mother's womb or inside; an embryo, seed, or child"*, or *"Hámile - atlıq - Ana*

qarnında yaki ishtejaña payda bolıp kiyatırğan janı bar zat, urıq, tuqım, bala” (Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi, 1982).

Finally, English uniquely allows “*child*” to extend metaphorically to products, results, or creations. Merriam-Webster notes “*product, result,*” exemplifying constructions like *child of one’s imagination or child of labor*. This instrumental or outcome-oriented extension is not observed in Karakalpak, where the concept “*bala*” remains tied to *animate offspring or human descendants*, with proliferation expressed via the verb *balalaw*.

Despite their wide range of synonyms, the words “child” in English and “bala” in Karakalpak are general terms that can be used in place of the aforementioned synonyms. The following dictionary entries are included in the “Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi,”: (meaning units)

The word “bala” can be used in various contexts in the Karakalpak language. Specifically, “bala” (noun) refers not only to “underage, immature, infant, young” but also to a person's offspring of any age. Additionally, the compound word “bala-shaǵa” encompasses all family members, including the wife, of a person:

1. Bala atlıq. 1. Úlkeyip, erjetpegen, boyjetpegen, náreste, bópe, jasbóbek, ul qız (ul bala, er bala, qızbala) (underage, minor, infant, baby, young infant, boy (boy, boy, girl)) (Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi., 1982, 184).

2. Bala-shaǵa – hayal menen balalarǵa baylanıslı, biradamnıń hayalimenen er hám qızbalaları (referring to wife and children, a person's spouse and their sons and daughters). (Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi., 1982, 189).

3. Additionally, the word or concept of “*child*” can refer not only to humans but also to the children of animals:

- Haywanatlardıń, qanatlı quslardıń, janlı- janwarlardıń jasları, jastólleri (The young and offspring of animals, winged birds, and living creatures (Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi., 1982, 189).

It can also be used as an addressing word by adding an attributive suffix:

Úlken jastaǵılardıń ózlerinen kishkenelerge aytatuǵın qaratpa sózi (A term of address used by older people to those younger than themselves.) - Durıs b a l a m ,

ala baxarden koshayik, Nurjan shirani qaytajakip berdi (“That’s right, my child, let’s move in early spring”, Nurjan relit the lamp) (S. Xojaniyazov). (Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi., 1982, 189).

Shaǵılmaǵan, shınıqpaǵan, jas (In figurative meaning: Inexperienced, unrestrained, young)) (Qaraqalpaq tiliniń túsindirme sózligi., 1982, 189).

Thus, the dictionary-based analysis indicates that the lexemes “bala” and “child” are each codified with three principal meanings that constitute a coherent semantic complex. The basic meaning “boy or girl” is specified as referring to a person who is typically young, generally up to adolescence, and often of nursing or early age. In addition, dictionaries distinguish a figurative meaning denoting “an adult characterised by inexperience and naivety who retains childish behaviour”, as well as “a childish, naive, and thoughtless person”, presenting these evaluative extensions as separate senses.

At the same time, the Karakalpak language demonstrates an additional culture-specific extension: the expression “adambalası” may denote “humanity as a whole”, whereas English does not employ “child” in this generalized sense. Conversely, English allows “child” to be used in reference to “*inanimate entities*” as the “*result*” or “*product*” of an action, while Karakalpak does not extend “bala” to inanimate reference; instead, the verb “balalaw” is used to express the idea of increase or proliferation.

The comparative analysis of the lexemes “child” in English and “bala” in Karakalpak demonstrates that, despite their functional equivalence as core nominators of the concept CHILD, the two lexemes encode both shared semantic universals and language-specific conceptual extensions shaped by distinct cultural and cognitive frameworks.

1. Core Denotative Meaning: Age and Development

In both English and Karakalpak, the nucleus of the conceptual field is the biological and developmental sense of a young human being. English dictionaries consistently define “child” as a “*young human being not yet an adult,*” typically spanning infancy to puberty.

Similarly, Karakalpak lexicographic sources define “*bala*” as “*úlkeyip, erjetpegen, boyjetpegen*”, emphasizing immaturity, nursing age, and early childhood.

This parallelism confirms the presence of a semantic universal, whereby CHILD is conceptualized primarily through chronological age and physical immaturity, reflecting a shared cognitive model grounded in human developmental experience.

2. Kinship and Lineage Extension

A second major semantic layer common to both languages is the kinship-based extension, where “*child / bala*” denotes a “*son or daughter regardless of age*”. English dictionaries (Oxford, Cambridge, Merriam-Webster) explicitly encode this sense, allowing “*child*” to refer to adult offspring within a genealogical framework.

Karakalpak not only shares this extension but develops it more elaborately through a rich lexical network: *perzent, násil, áwlad, urpaq, zúryad, tuqım*, and others. These lexemes foreground continuity of lineage, ancestry, and generational succession, indicating that the concept CHILD in Karakalpak is deeply embedded in collective and genealogical consciousness, rather than being limited to an age-based categorization.

3. Figurative and Evaluative Meanings: Inexperience and Naivety

Both lexemes exhibit figurative extensions in which CHILD denotes inexperience, naivety, or lack of maturity. English dictionaries, particularly Webster (1828), define “*child*” as “*one weak in knowledge or experience,*” while Karakalpak dictionaries include the figurative sense “*shağılmağan, shınıqpagan, jas*”. These evaluative meanings reflect a shared conceptual metaphor: “Lack of experience is childhood”.

However, English extends this figurative sense further by emphasizing susceptibility to influence, as seen in Merriam-Webster’s definition “*one strongly influenced by another or by a condition.*” This nuance foregrounds psychological dependence and social malleability, which is less explicitly encoded in Karakalpak lexicography.

4. Prenatal and Neonatal Extensions

Modern English dictionaries extend the semantic scope of “child” to include prenatal and neonatal stages, explicitly referring to “an unborn or recently born person.” This extension aligns conceptually with the Karakalpak lexeme “*hámile*”, which denotes a living entity newly formed in the womb.

While English incorporates this meaning directly into the lexeme “*child*”, Karakalpak maintains a lexical distinction, assigning prenatal reference to a separate term. This suggests different strategies of lexical specialization versus semantic expansion across the two languages.

5. Metaphorical Extension to Inanimate Entities (English-Specific)

A significant cross-linguistic divergence appears in the metaphorical extension to inanimate entities. English allows “*child*” to denote “*a product, result, or creation*” (e.g., *a child of imagination, a child of labor*). This reflects an abstract metaphor: “CREATION IS PROGENY”.

Karakalpak does not permit “*bala*” to denote inanimate results. Instead, the notion of increase or production is expressed through the verb “*balalaw*”, preserving the lexeme “*bala*” exclusively for “*animate, living beings*”. This restriction indicates a culturally grounded conceptual boundary between biological life and abstract production.

6. Culture-Specific Extensions in Karakalpak

Karakalpak demonstrates unique semantic expansions absent in English. The expression “*adambalası*” (“the child of man”) denotes “humanity as a whole”, conceptualizing CHILD as a collective anthropological category. This usage reflects a worldview in which human beings are understood primarily through shared origin and moral unity, rather than individual developmental status.

English lacks an equivalent generalized usage of “child”, underscoring a cultural divergence in how human collectivity is linguistically framed.

7. Pragmatic and Addressive Functions

The Karakalpak lexeme “*bala*” also functions as “a term of address”, particularly from older to younger speakers as “*balam*”, encoding affection, hierarchy, and social proximity. While English may use “*my child*” in limited or

archaic contexts, this function is neither systematic nor lexicographically central, highlighting another pragmatic asymmetry between the two languages.

Thus, the concept CHILD emerges not merely as a biological category but as a culturally mediated cognitive construct, shaped by societal values, family structures, and linguistic categorization strategies. The findings confirm that dictionaries function not only as descriptive tools but also as cultural mirrors, encoding how different linguistic communities conceptualize childhood, humanity, and social relations.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study demonstrate that the concept *CHILD*, as represented in English and Karakalpak lexicographic sources, forms a structured semantic complex combining biological, relational, and evaluative components. The analysis confirms that both *child* and *bala* share a common conceptual nucleus centred on the idea of a young human being, which reflects a universal cognitive basis of meaning grounded in human developmental experience. Such stability of core meaning supports the view that dictionary definitions systematically encode conventionalised semantic knowledge.

At the same time, the comparative analysis reveals that the extension of this core meaning differs significantly across the two languages. In English, the lexeme *child* demonstrates a higher degree of semantic flexibility, including metaphorical extensions such as “product” or “result,” as well as meanings related to influence and dependency. These patterns correspond to broader mechanisms of semantic extension and figurative reinterpretation observed in lexical semantics. In contrast, the Karakalpak lexeme *bala* remains more tightly connected to animate reference, kinship relations, and social identity, reflecting a stronger integration of lexical meaning with cultural and genealogical values.

Moreover, the Karakalpak data reveal culturally specific conceptualisations, such as *adambalası*, which extends the meaning of *bala* to denote humanity as a whole. This indicates that lexical meaning is not only a linguistic phenomenon but

also a reflection of culturally embedded worldviews, where concepts are shaped by collective experience and social structure.

Thus, the study confirms that lexicographic sources function as structured representations of both semantic and cultural knowledge. The concept *CHILD* emerges as a hybrid construct, combining universal semantic features with language-specific conceptual extensions.

In conclusion, the results highlight the importance of combining lexicographic, cognitive, and comparative approaches in order to uncover the deeper conceptual organisation of language. Further research may build on these findings by incorporating corpus-based data or expanding the analysis to other culturally significant concepts, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between language, cognition, and culture.

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