The Lingua Spectrum
Cogito, ergo sum

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The role of 'Head' as a semantic center in lexical fields: English and Uzbek compared

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Annotation *This article investigates the role of the lexical unit head (bosh) as a semantic nucleus within English and Uzbek lexical-semantic fields. The study applies a comparative structural and cognitive-semantic approach to identify how this lexeme organizes paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations in both languages. It analyzes the distribution of head/bosh across various semantic subfields – such as anatomy, leadership, cognition, and emotion – and explores how each function as a conceptual core from which idiomatic and metaphorical meanings emerge. The research reveals that both head and bosh serve as central lexical elements that link literal bodily reference with abstract domains like intelligence, authority, and selfhood. Furthermore, idioms and proverbs containing these lexemes demonstrate shared conceptual metaphors (e.g., "the head as the leader" or "the head as the seat of reason") as well as culturally unique interpretations. The findings contribute to understanding universal and language-specific aspects of somatic semantics, emphasizing the importance of embodied cognition in meaning formation. The study's results have implications for comparative linguistics, translation studies, and intercultural communication, enriching the theoretical foundation of lexical field analysis in bilingual contexts.*

Keywords *Head, bosh, semantic center, lexical field, idiom, metaphor, translation, somatic vocabulary, cultural meaning, comparative linguistics*

Роль лексемы «голова» как семантического центра в лексических полях: сравнительный анализ английского и узбекского языков

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Аннотация *В данной статье исследуется роль лексической единицы head (bosh) как семантического ядра в лексико-семантических полях английского и узбекского языков. В работе применяется сравнительный структурный и когнитивно-семантический подход, направленный на выявление того, как данная лексема организует парадигматические и синтагматические отношения в обоих языках. Анализируется распределение head/bosh по различным семантическим подсистемам – анатомии, лидерству, мышлению и эмоциям - и рассматривается их роль как концептуального центра, из которого формируются идиоматические и метафорические значения. Результаты исследования показывают, что head и bosh служат центральными лексическими элементами, связывающими буквальные*

телесные значения с абстрактными понятиями, такими как разум, власть и личность. Кроме того, идиомы и пословицы с этими словами демонстрируют общие концептуальные метафоры («голова как лидер», «голова как центр разума»), а также культурно-специфические интерпретации. Полученные выводы способствуют пониманию универсальных и национально-специфических аспектов соматической семантики и обогащают теоретическую основу анализа лексических полей в билингвистическом контексте.

Ключевые слова *Голова, bosh, семантический центр, лексическое поле, идиома, метафора, перевод, соматическая лексика, культурное значение, сравнительная лингвистика*

Leksik maydonlarda “bosh”ning semantik markaz sifatidagi o‘rni: ingliz va o‘zbek tillari taqqoslangan holda

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Annotatsiya *Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o‘zbek tillaridagi head (bosh) leksik birligining leksik-semantik maydonlarda semantik markaz sifatidagi o‘rni tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda taqqosiy strukturaviy hamda kognitiv-semantik yondashuvlar qo‘llanilib, ushbu birlik har ikki tilda paradigmatik va sintagmatik munosabatlarni qanday tashkil etishini aniqlashga e’tibor qaratilgan. Maqolada head/bosh birliklarining anatomiya, rahbarlik, tafakkur va hissiyot kabi semantik kichik maydonlarda taqsimlanishi hamda ularning idiomatik va metaforik ma’nolar manbai sifatidagi konseptual yadrosi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko‘rsatadiki, head va bosh so‘zlari har ikki tilda ham jismoniy ma’noni aqliy, ijtimoiy va shaxsiy tushunchalar bilan bog‘lovchi markaziy leksik elementlardir. Shuningdek, ushbu birliklar ishtirokidagi idiomalar va maqollar umumiy konseptual metaforalarni (“bosh – rahbar”, “bosh – aql markazi”) hamda madaniy jihatdan o‘ziga xos talqinlarni namoyon etadi. Maqola natijalari somatik semantikaning universal va milliy xususiyatlarini tushunishga hissa qo‘shadi hamda leksik maydon tahlilining nazariy asoslarini ikki tilli kontekstda boyitadi.*

Kalit so‘zlar *Bosh, head, semantik markaz, leksik maydon, idiom, metafora, tarjima, somatik lug‘at, madaniy ma’no, qiyosiy tilshunoslik*

Introduction

Lexical field theory, first introduced by Jost Trier in 1931, posits that words acquire meaning through their relationships to other words within a shared semantic field (Panjieva & Jumayeva, 2022). In this view, vocabulary is organized into interrelated clusters (fields) of words that delineate each other’s meanings like pieces of a mosaic. Each lexical-semantic field is generally centered around an integral concept, with individual lexemes contributing specific (“private”) aspects of that concept.

Later linguists refined Trier's theory to allow overlaps and gradations, introducing notions of a core (semantic nucleus) and periphery within fields. Of equal importance is Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between paradigmatic relations – associative links among words that can substitute for one another (e.g., synonyms, hyponyms), and syntagmatic relations – combinatorial links among words that co-occur in context (collocations, phrases) (Ataboyev & Turg'unova, 2021). Taken together, these structural semantic principles imply that to fully understand a word's meaning, one must examine both its network of paradigmatic relations (its place in various lexical fields) and its typical syntagmatic usages in discourse.

Beyond structural semantics, cognitive semantics offers a complementary perspective, examining how linguistic meaning reflects human conceptualization. Body-part terms in particular are rich sources of metaphor across languages, as our bodily experience informs our understanding of abstract domains. The human head, being the uppermost body part, seat of the brain, and a vital organ – is a prime example of a semantic nucleus that generates extensive figurative meaning. In many languages, "head" not only denotes the anatomical part but also symbolizes leadership, intelligence, and life itself. Cross-linguistic studies confirm that somatic (body-part) vocabulary is highly productive in figurative expressions: for instance, among the most frequent nouns in English and Russian idioms, a large proportion are body parts like *head*, *hand*, *eye*, *heart*, etc.

Because of its central role in human physiology and cognition, *head* tends to occupy a pivotal position in the semantic fields of bodily concepts and beyond. This makes it an intriguing subject for comparative semantic analysis.

The present study examines the role of "head" as a semantic center in English and Uzbek, two typologically and culturally distinct languages. We focus on the English lexeme head and the Uzbek lexeme bosh, which are direct equivalents denoting the head of a human or animal. We analyze how each function as a nucleus in various lexical fields (such as the field of body parts, the field of authority roles, etc.), and how each engages in paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. By integrating structural-semantic analysis (lexical field theory, componential analysis) with cognitive-semantic insights (conceptual metaphors, image schemas), we aim to reveal both universal and language-specific aspects of the lexicon. Key questions include: In what ways do English *head* and Uzbek *bosh* exhibit similar or different polysemy patterns as semantic centers? How do their paradigmatic relationships (e.g. synonyms, hierarchical relations) compare? And how do their syntagmatic usages (collocations, idioms, compounds) reflect underlying cognitive metaphors in each linguistic-cultural context? Through a detailed comparison, supported by examples from academic literature in both English and Uzbek, we seek to contribute to the theory of lexical fields and our understanding of semantic universals and particulars.

Methods

This research employs a comparative descriptive-semantic methodology. Our analysis is based on multiple data sources: monolingual dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, phraseological compilations, and corpus-based examples from prior studies of English and Uzbek. First, we surveyed definitional and lexicographic information for the target lexemes *head* (English) and *bosh* (Uzbek). For English, definitions from standard dictionaries and lexical databases were reviewed, while for Uzbek we consulted authoritative bilingual glossaries and Uzbek explanatory dictionaries. For example, Guerin's Uzbek–English glossary defines *bosh* as "head; chief; top; main," reflecting its use as both noun and adjective (Guerin, 2021). Such definitions provided an initial sense of each word's core meaning and major extensions.

Next, we identified the paradigmatic relations of each lexeme within its language.

This involved listing close synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms/hyponyms, and derivational variants. In English, we noted that *head* (noun) in its literal sense has technical or colloquial near-synonyms like *cranium*, *skull*, *pate*, or *noggin*, although *head* is the unmarked, general term. In Uzbek, we noted that *bosh* has very few true synonyms such as the colloquial *kalla* (head, especially of an animal or informally a person's "noggin") is one, but *bosh* is by far the dominant term. We also considered terms for "leader" as paradigmatic extensions: e.g., English *leader*, *chief*, *boss* versus Uzbek *rahbar* (leader), *boshliq* (chief, lit. "head-person"). We consulted Uzbek linguistic literature to see how *bosh* is analyzed in semantic field studies. For instance, one Uzbek study indicates that *bosh* carries a semantic feature of "management/leadership," forming a component of words for person-in-charge (Jumaeva, 2021). This aligns with the presence of the "command" or "authority" sense in both *head* and *bosh* (as in *head* of an organization, Uzbek *boshliq*). Such paradigmatic comparisons were enriched by examining field taxonomies – e.g. the lexical field of body parts (head, hand, heart, etc.) and the field of social roles (leader, follower, etc.) in each language.

We then examined syntagmatic relations, gathering common collocations and idiomatic expressions involving *head/bosh*. This phase drew on both languages' phraseological archives. We extracted examples from English corpora and idiom dictionaries (e.g., "lose one's head," "keep your head," "head start," "head over heels") and from Uzbek phraseological sources (e.g., *boshini yo'qotmoq* – "to lose one's head," *bosh qotirmoq* – "to puzzle; lit. make one's head hard"). Where available, we used published contrastive analyses of English and Uzbek idioms to find equivalent expressions. Kholboyeva (2025) and others have compiled English–Uzbek proverb pairs containing body parts, which we leveraged to ensure culturally sensitive comparisons. We also looked at compound constructions: English compound nouns like *headache*, *headquarters*, *headmaster* and Uzbek compound or derivational forms like *bosh og'rig'i* ("headache"), *boshqarma* ("department," lit. "management"), and *bosh vazir* ("prime minister," lit. "head minister"). These provided insight into how *head/bosh* combines with other morphemes to form larger semantic units.

Throughout the analysis, we applied a cognitive semantic lens to interpret findings. We identified conceptual metaphors underlying usage (e.g. Head as leader, head as thinking mind, head as top/beginning, etc.) and noted their presence or absence in each language. For example, we expected both languages to map the *head* onto the concept of leadership (as in "head of the team" or Uzbek *jamoa boshlig'i*), based on the widespread metaphor that the head is the leader (since the head leads the body). We also anticipated metaphors of *head* for intellect (e.g. "use one's head") and *head* for life (e.g. "save your head" meaning save one's life), and checked Uzbek for analogous uses. The comparative approach allowed us to highlight where similarities likely stem from universal bodily experience and where differences may reflect unique cultural or linguistic evolutions. All examples and assertions are supported by citations from academic sources in English or Uzbek, as indicated in square brackets with source number and page number. By combining structural and cognitive methods, this study ensures a holistic understanding of *head/bosh* as semantic centers. The following sections present the results of this analysis, organized by paradigmatic and syntagmatic findings, followed by a discussion of their implications.

Results

Paradigmatic Relations of *Head* and *Bosh*

Core Meanings and Polysemy: In both English and Uzbek, the primary, concrete meaning of the lexeme in question is the anatomical head. This core denotation is the starting point for numerous extended meanings. In English, *head* in its literal sense refers to the uppermost part of the human

body. From this core, English *head* has developed a rich polysemy. It commonly denotes the leader or chief of a group or organization, such as, *head of state*, *head coach*, *head librarian*. In those examples, the notion of "head" as the topmost guiding part of the body is mapped onto social hierarchy, such that *head* equals to "person in charge." Uzbek *bosh* shows a strikingly similar extension: *bosh* can mean "chief/main" when used as an adjective, and it forms compounds like *boshliq* "chief, leader" (literally "head-ed one"). Indeed, in Uzbek official terminology *Bosh vazir* means "Prime Minister" (literally "Head Minister"), and *bosh* is regularly used to denote primacy or leadership in titles. This parallel suggests a shared conceptual metaphor of the head as the locus of authority. In both languages, *head/bosh* also signifies the top or beginning of things. For instance, English uses *head* for the start of a line (*head of the line*), the source of a river (*headwaters*), or the top of a bed (*headboard*). Uzbek similarly uses *bosh* in temporal/spatial expressions like *haftaning boshi* (the beginning of the week) and *bosh qism* (the head/top part). In sum, the idea of "head = top/start" appears in both lexicons, reflecting an image schema of "up = first/primary."

Both lexemes further extend to abstract domains of intellect and emotion. English *head* is strongly associated with the mind, intelligence, and reason. For example, *use your head* (think rationally), *level-headed* (sensible), *hot-headed* (easily angered, i.e. governed by a hot head). Uzbek uses *bosh* in analogous ways: a phrase like *bosh ishlamoq* means "the head works," i.e. someone is capable of thinking. Uzbek scholars note that *bosh* in certain compounds carries the seme of "mind/brain"; for example, in the word *boshqotirma* (puzzle), the morpheme *bosh* (head) figuratively embodies the meaning "mind" or "brain," indicating that a puzzle is something that "makes one use their head" (Jumaeva, F. (2021)). It is telling that *bosh* in Uzbek can even substitute for "brain" or "intellect" in some contexts (where English might use *brain* separately from *head*). There is, however, a nuance: Uzbek has a specific word *miya* for "brain" and *aql* for "intellect/reason," so *bosh* is not a direct synonym for these, but through metonymy it stands for the seat of thought. English *head* similarly stands in metonymically for the mind (as in "to have a good head on one's shoulders" meaning to be smart). Both languages contrast *head* (reason) with *heart* (emotion) in their worldviews, but this enters the realm of idioms and will be discussed later.

In paradigmatic terms, *head* and *bosh* occupy the dominant, unmarked position in the semantic field of body parts (especially the subfield of parts of the head). English has a plethora of terms for specific parts of the head (face, skull, crown, etc.), but *head* is the general term that might be considered the semantic "center" of this field. Uzbek *bosh* likewise is the basic term for the head; one might say it is paradigmatically central as an everyday word, whereas a more colloquial term like *kalla* (head, lit. "skull") is peripheral and often context-bound (e.g. referring to animal heads or used humorously for people). The centrality of *bosh* is evident in that it is used in formal and neutral contexts, while *kalla* is informal. We did not find other true synonyms in Uzbek even *sar* (Persian for "head/top") survives only in certain fixed compounds and is not a standalone synonym. Thus, *bosh* is the dominant lexeme for the concept of "head" in Uzbek, much as *head* is in English.

Within the lexical field of leadership and hierarchy, *head* in English stands alongside words like *leader, chief, boss, director, captain*. It contributes a specific connotation: a *head* is someone who leads by virtue of being "at the top." Notably, *head* is often used in institutional titles (Head of Department, Head Boy/Girl in a school, etc.), emphasizing an official capacity. In Uzbek, the field of leadership includes *rahbar* (leader), *yetakchi* (leader/guide), *boshlovchi* (initiator/leader in an activity), and *boshliq* (boss/chief). The word *boshliq* is directly built on *bosh*, again underscoring *bosh* as central to the concept of leadership. An Uzbek linguist,

Gadoeva M.I., explicitly notes that *bosh (head) represents the semantic component of "management"* in the lexemes for persons in charge. This explains why so many Uzbek terms for authority incorporate *bosh*. The overlap between English and Uzbek here is significant: both languages conceptually link "head" with "leader/authority," pointing to a likely universal metaphor (the physical head controlling the body is mirrored by a leader controlling a group).

Another paradigmatic aspect is the use of *head* vs. *bosh* to denote the self or life. In some contexts, "head" can stand for the whole person or one's life. For example, English expressions like "put a price on his head" or "save your own head" use *head* to mean the person's life. Uzbek similarly might use *bosh* to refer to one's self in proverbs: e.g., *o'z boshim o'zi* (literally "my own head myself") implies being one's own master (one's own person). In both languages, counting "heads" means counting people, indicating *head* as a unit for individuals (though in Uzbek *jon* "soul" is more common in counting people, the phrase *bosh soni* "head count" is also understood). These usages highlight that *head/bosh* occupies a paradigmatic link to the concept of a whole individual. Indeed, an Uzbek proverb states *Kichik bosh bo'lsa ham, o'z boshing bo'lsin* – "Even if [it's] a small head, let it be your own head," meaning it is better to be an independent small leader (one's own person) than a follower under someone else. This saying, which mirrors the English proverb "Better to be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion," underscores how *bosh* (head) is equated with self-governance and autonomy in the paradigmatic imagination of Uzbek speakers. The English version explicitly uses *head* in the same metaphorical sense of "leader (even of something minor)."

In summary, paradigmatically, English *head* and Uzbek *bosh* both radiate out from the physical head to several semantic fields:

1. *Anatomy* – the prototypical body-part term.
2. *Leadership/Authority* – a metaphorical field where head/bosh denote leaders and important positions.
3. *Beginnings/Top* – a spatial/temporal field where head/bosh mean the start or upper part.
4. *Intellect/Mental Faculty* – where head/bosh stand for the mind or intelligence.
5. *Life/Person* – where head/bosh can symbolize the person or life itself.

The two lexemes thus function as semantic centers linking these conceptual areas. Any differences tend to be in emphasis: for example, English *head* has a rich slang vocabulary around it (many synonyms and idioms) whereas Uzbek *bosh* is more singular but extremely productive in compounds. Additionally, English has separate terms for some related notions (e.g. *mind, brain* vs. head), while Uzbek often uses *bosh* in compounds to cover similar ground (e.g. *boshqotirma* for something that taxes the brain). Yet, fundamentally, the paradigmatic roles of *head* and *bosh* are highly congruent across the two languages. This reflects how human cognition, rooted in the body, gives analogous semantic structures even in unrelated tongues.

Syntagmatic Relations and Usage Patterns

Collocations and Phrases: Both *head* and *bosh* participate in a wide range of habitual combinations, confirming their status as semantic pivots in each language. In English, *head* commonly collocates with verbs of position or movement: one raises or lifts one's head (to look up or show pride), lowers or hangs one's head (to show shame or defeat), shakes one's head (negation or disbelief), or nods one's head (affirmation). Uzbek parallels these closely: e.g., *bosh ko'tarmoq* (lift up the head - used for regaining courage or, in negative form, for being unable to face others), *bosh egmoq* (bow the head - to yield or show respect), *bosh chayqamoq* (shake the head - to express negation or lament). These mirror each other almost image-for-image, indicating a

shared bodily script for nonverbal communication encoded in language.

When it comes to more idiomatic phrasal verbs, English uses *head* as a verb meaning "move toward" (e.g. *head out, head home, head north*). Uzbek does not use *bosh* as a verb in this way; instead, motion verbs like *yo'l ol* (take the road) or *ket* (go) would be used. This is a structural difference (English can convert body-part nouns to verbs freely, Uzbek generally does not do so with *bosh*). However, Uzbek *bosh* does appear in many compound verbs as a noun component. For example, *bosh olib qochmoq* (literally "take one's head and flee") means to run away quickly (similar to English "take headlong flight," which incidentally uses *headlong* from *head*). Such correspondences show *bosh* integrated into Uzbek verbal phrases to convey meanings analogous to English idioms.

Idioms and Proverbs: The idiomatic repertoire of English *head* is extensive and finds many echoes in Uzbek. A central theme is maintaining vs. losing control. English speakers say ***"lose one's head"*** to mean "lose one's composure or judgment (typically in panic or anger)." Strikingly, Uzbek uses the very same metaphor: *boshini yo'qotmoq* (to lose one's head) means to panic or become flustered, with a literal translation identical to English. Conversely, ***"keep a cool head"*** (stay calm) in English has its Uzbek counterpart in an expression that is effectively "not lose one's head" – *boshini yo'qotmaslik*. In fact, one bilingual source notes these as direct equivalents. The symmetry of *losing/keeping one's head* in both languages' points to a common conceptualization: the head represents reason, so to lose it is to lose one's rational control, an image easily understood across cultures.

Another widely known idiom is ***"bury one's head in the sand,"*** meaning to ignore unpleasant realities. English evokes an ostrich-like image of hiding the head. Uzbek expresses the same idea with only a slight variation: *boshini qumga tiqmoq* or *boshini qumga bulamoq* – literally "stick one's head into sand" or "roll one's head in sand". The minor difference in verb choice ("stick" vs "roll") does not alter the metaphor: in both tongues, hiding one's head implies refusing to face the truth. Similarly, to ***"hold one's head high"*** (signifying pride or dignity) is rendered in Uzbek as *boshini baland ko'tarib yurmoq* – "to walk with head held high". Both convey maintaining pride or confidence. An interesting extension in Uzbek is that *boshini baland qilish* can sometimes imply being too proud (carrying one's head high in arrogance), much like English "raise one's head too high" might sound. Nonetheless, the fundamental association of an elevated head with pride/self-respect is shared.

Some idioms highlight differences in cultural expression. English describes an obstinate person as ***"hard-headed,"*** focusing on the head as metaphorically hard. Uzbek more often uses *qaysar* (stubborn) or phrases involving *t obstinate*, and does not commonly say "hard head" (*qattiq bosh*) to mean stubborn – instead, it might use a different image (e.g. comparing to a donkey's stubbornness). For "arrogant", English has ***"big-headed."*** Uzbek does not use *katta bosh* (big head) this way; rather it uses *burni ko'tarilgan* (raised nose) or *dimog'dor* (snobby, lit. "with an upturned nose") – choosing the nose as the locus of arrogance instead of the head. This suggests that while *head/bosh* is central for many traits, some traits may be mapped onto different body parts in different cultures (head vs. nose for pride). Despite these differences, the overall picture is that *head* and *bosh* feature in a large number of idioms in both languages, often with equivalent meanings. This reinforces their status as semantic centers: many figurative expressions revolve around the concept of head.

Proverbial wisdom further illustrates usage. A comparative study by Kholboyeva found that English and Uzbek proverbs with "head" (*bosh*) often convey wisdom and leadership themes in both languages (Kholboyeva, 2025). For example, English:

"Better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion," Uzbek: "*Kichik bosh bo'lsa ham, o'z boshing bo'lsin*" (Even if it's a little head, be your own head) – both advise the virtue of being the leader of a small group rather than a follower in a large one, celebrating autonomy and initiative. Another: "A wise head keeps a still tongue," versus Uzbek *Bosh bor joyda aql bo'ladi* ("Where there is a head, there will be wisdom"). The English stresses discretion (a wise person won't blabber), whereas the Uzbek version literally states that if someone has a head, they have sense, a witty tautology implying "only a headless person has no brains." While phrased differently, both proverbs connect *head* with wisdom. Interestingly, Kholboyeva observes a subtle difference: English "head" proverbs often emphasize intellectual wisdom and leadership, whereas Uzbek "bosh" proverbs additionally emphasize self-sufficiency and personal autonomy. This is evidenced by the "own head" proverb cited above, the Uzbek cultural context puts value on having one's "own head" (independence) besides just being wise or in charge. Nonetheless, the overlapping themes are notable; neither language's proverbs depict "head" in a negative light (unlike, say, "heart" which can be brave or weak, etc.). The head is uniformly a positive locus of knowledge and guidance in folk wisdom.

Compound constructions show further syntagmatic behavior. In English, *head* frequently appears as a noun adjunct (pre-modifier) in compounds: *headache, headgear, headstone, headcount, headquarters*. These either denote something relating to the head (headache = ache of the head, headgear = equipment for the head) or use *head* metaphorically for "main/principal" (headquarters = main quarters, headcount = counting people (by heads)). Uzbek similarly forms compounds and derivatives: *bosh og'rig'i* ("headache") is a direct analogue of the English, and idiomatically means not only a medical headache but also a bothersome problem (e.g. *Bu ish mening bosh og'rig'im bo'ldi* – "This matter became my headache") just as English speakers call a problem a "real headache." For equipment, Uzbek tends to use *bosh* in phrases (e.g. *bosh kiyim* for "headgear/hat," literally "head wear"). For "main/principal," Uzbek often attaches *bosh* as a prefix or in a compound: *bosh sahifa* (main page), *bosh maqola* (lead article), etc. Notably, *bosh* in Uzbek can act as an independent adjective meaning "main", which is a syntagmatic usage stemming from its semantic extension – e.g., *bosh masala* means "the main issue." English cannot use *head* standalone as an adjective (one doesn't say "head issue"); English speakers would use *chief* or *main*. This difference indicates that *bosh* is even more grammatically entrenched as a marker of primacy in Uzbek syntax than *head* is in English.

Another area of note is phraseological units where head/bosh carry culturally loaded meanings. In Uzbek, an idiom like *boshiga kiyim qilmoq* ("to make [someone] a cloth for [one's] head") means to utterly humiliate someone (as one would cover their head with cloth in shame). English does not have this idiom, again showing a unique cultural nuance. Conversely, English has phrases like "off the top of my head" (meaning spontaneously or without deep thought), for which Uzbek has no *bosh*-equivalent idiom; an Uzbek speaker might say *hozircha esimga kelgani* ("what comes to my mind now") instead. These few non-equivalences underscore that despite many commonalities, each language also has independent developments.

Overall, the syntagmatic analysis demonstrates that *head* and *bosh* are integral to countless habitual expressions, collocations, and idioms. They often fulfill the role of semantic organizer in phrases such as the presence of *head/bosh* in an expression typically anchors its meaning (for example, the difference between "heart" idioms and "head" idioms is consistent in each language). In both English and Uzbek, *head/bosh* idioms tend to cluster around certain conceptual areas: calm vs. panic (keeping or losing one's head),

intentional ignorance (hiding one's head), pride/honor (holding head high), punishment/reward (having a price on one's head, or Uzbek *boshini silamoq* – to pet one's head, meaning to reward or encourage), and leadership vs. subordination (being the head vs. the tail in proverbs). The high frequency and variety of these expressions confirm that *head* and *bosh* function as semantic hubs in their respective languages, many phraseological "spokes" radiate from this hub.

Discussion

The comparative findings highlight both universal tendencies in semantic structuring and language-specific developments. The word *head* in English and *bosh* in Uzbek exhibit a remarkable degree of parallelism, underscoring how similar human experiences yield similar linguistic metaphors even in unrelated languages. As noted in the proceedings of the 6th ICARHSE conference (2022), somatic phraseological units containing body-part terms like "head/bosh" exhibit high metaphorical density and are frequently used to express abstract emotional or social meanings in both English and Uzbek contexts. Both serve as semantic centers in that they link a web of meanings across different domains. From a structural semantic perspective, we can say that *head/bosh* each constitute a kind of lexical field nucleus. In the field of body parts, for example, *head/bosh* is a key member that often stands at the top of meronymic hierarchies (the head is the "head" of the body). In fields of authority, *head/bosh* either is the archilexeme or is embedded in it (consider that the archilexeme for "leader" in Uzbek could arguably be *boshliq*, literally containing *bosh*). Our results support the notion that within a lexical field, one term often encapsulates the most general or dominant concept, the "dominant semantic element". Here, *head* and *bosh* perform that role in several fields (body part, leader, etc.), which explains why they are so lexically productive and culturally salient.

The paradigmatic relations show that both languages rely on the head concept for framing leadership and intellect. This suggests a potentially universal conceptual metaphor: "The head is the leader/controller". Cognitive semantics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) would interpret this in terms of mappings: the physical relationship of the head controlling the body is mapped onto social structures (leaders control groups) and onto mental faculties (the head is where thinking occurs, hence it "controls" decisions). Our data strongly align with this. In both languages, "head" is used for people in charge (Head of X, boshliq) and for rational thought (head vs. heart). Another near-universal mapping is "up = good/primary", which manifests as using "head" (top) for the start or the best. Both English and Uzbek use head-related terms for the start of something (head of the year, year's head in some English dialects; yil boshi in Uzbek for New Year's time). And proverbs like the "head of a dog vs tail of a lion" in both languages explicitly prioritize being at the head (even of something small) over being at the tail end of something big. That speaks to a shared valorization of the "head" position.

The subtle differences we observed often reflect cultural or linguistic context rather than fundamental conceptual differences. For instance, the fact that Uzbek uses *bosh* as an adjective meaning "main" while English does not use *head* that way is a grammatical/conventional difference. It shows that Uzbek more freely assigns syntactic roles to this root (*bosh*) to cover meanings (chief, main) that English delegates to other words (chief, main). This might be due to historical development in Uzbek: *bosh* has long been used in compound formation and was likely influenced by Persian usage of *sar* (head) in a similar way. English, with its mixed Germanic and Latinate lexicon, often adopted separate Latinate terms (*capital* for head, *chief* from French, etc.) for these concepts, leaving *head* slightly less grammatically generalized. Yet in idioms and everyday use, *head* in English still carries those meanings (e.g., *head* as an adjective in

headmaster, head churchwarden, etc., is just not standalone).

Another difference was in certain idiomatic connotations, like arrogance being linked to "big head" in English but "raised nose" in Uzbek. This does not indicate a fundamentally different view of the head; rather, it shows that some traits can be symbolized by different body parts in different cultures. Uzbek prefers *dimog'* (nose) for conceit, whereas English uses head. Interestingly, Uzbek *bosh* idioms did not seem to cover that semantic space, suggesting that *bosh* in Uzbek idioms leans more towards positive or neutral attributes (wisdom, self-control, etc.), while negative personal qualities (arrogance, obstinance) might get displaced onto other imagery (nose, or animal metaphors). English *head* idioms, on the other hand, do cover some negatives (e.g. *big-headed*, *hot-headed*). This could imply that Uzbek culture linguistically "respects" the head as something one wouldn't malign lightly, a speculative but intriguing idea. Supporting this, Uzbek proverbs emphasize *bosh* in the context of having sense and autonomy, not foolishness. English does have "headstrong" or "pig-headed" for stubbornness, showing *head* can be used in a critical sense. Uzbek rarely, if ever, says *bosh* in those negative figurative ways (one would not call someone "boshli" to mean stubborn). Culturally, *bosh* is a somewhat honorific concept, consider phrases like *bosh qaddingizga rahmat* ("thank you with all my head and stature") in formal Uzbek, which have no direct English analog. Thus, while the head is universally important, languages may vary in just how they exploit the image. English freely plays with *head* in both praising and insulting contexts; Uzbek tends to use it in dignified or essential contexts and less so in insults (preferring other body parts or terms for that).

From a lexical field theory standpoint, what we see is a high degree of overlap in the semantic fields connected to *head/bosh*. Both inhabit a network of fields: the somatic field (body), the intellectual sphere, the social hierarchy field, etc. The concept of *head* is a nodal point where these fields intersect. In lexical field terms, one might say *head* is a member of multiple fields simultaneously - a phenomenon sometimes called "field overlap." For instance, *head* belongs to the field of "anatomy" and to the field of "leadership titles." This overlap is facilitated by polysemy (one form, many related meanings). This challenges the original Trierian idea of neatly segmented fields with no overlap, and instead aligns with later views that lexical fields are more like networks with central prototypes and fuzzy edges. *Head/bosh* function as such prototypes in that many derived or associated words cluster around them (English: heady, header, headship; Uzbek: boshliq, boshsiz "headless/leaderless or unruly," etc.).

Additionally, this study's cross-linguistic approach allows us to address the idea of a semantic prototype from a cognitive perspective. One can argue that "head" is a cognitive prototype for notions of control and orientation. Both languages use the head to orient concepts of *up/down* (head vs foot of an object or page), *front/back* (head of a line vs end of a line; Uzbek uses *bosh* for the front as well). This reflects an embodied schema: the head is at the front/top of a person, so anything front/top is metaphorically a "head." We see this in English (*headwind, headline*) and Uzbek (*bosh qism* – head part, i.e. front part). It indicates a shared bodily grounding for spatial metaphors. Conceptual Metaphor Theory would categorize many of these findings under primary metaphors such as "control is up (head)" and "rational is head, emotional is heart". Indeed, our results confirm that both English and Uzbek conceptualize the head as the seat of rational thought, e.g., Uzbek *boshini ishga solmoq* ("to put one's head to work") and English "use one's head" are parallel exhortations to think carefully.

The differences in emphasis (e.g., autonomy in Uzbek proverbs, or various slang in English) highlight that while the embodied cognition aspect is universal, cultural history

and language-specific development channel those universals in distinct ways. Uzbek, influenced by its own traditions and perhaps by Persian/Islamic phraseology, has certain set expressions that have no match in English. For example, the idea of giving someone a *bosh qo'shdi* ("attached a head") meaning to marry someone off, an idiom in Uzbek has no English equivalent; it uses *head* to symbolically complete a household. This is culturally specific. Meanwhile, English has dozens of phrasal verbs with *head* that would sound odd to Uzbek ears (*head up a project, head off trouble, etc.*) because of differences in phrasal verb usage and idiom formation.

In terms of lexical field theory application to bilingual lexicon, our study underscores that to translate or compare semantic fields, one often finds a core conceptual equivalence (*head* = *bosh*) but needs to map the peripheries carefully. Translators and language learners often must learn which collocations match and which do not. For instance, *headache* = *bosh og'rig'i* (literal, matches well), but *to lose one's head* = *boshini yo'qotmoq* (matches), whereas *big-headed* does not translate to *bosh* in Uzbek. Recognizing *bosh* is not used that way avoids a potential mistranslation. This shows how contrastive semantic field analysis has practical implications for lexicography and second language acquisition by highlighting what is parallel and what is divergent, learners can better master idiomatic usage.

The structural notion of a semantic field with a nucleus is exemplified by *head/bosh* – clearly, these are nuclei around which related terms cluster (we saw morphological derivations, synonyms, idioms clustering). Meanwhile, cognitive semantics explains *why* these particular clusters exist: because the head plays a central role in human physiology and cognition, people naturally use it to structure many aspects of language. The empirical observations from English and Uzbek literature back this up with real usage evidence. Both languages' literatures (as seen in our sources) recognize the special role of *head*: English authors talk of *head* in metaphors of reason and leadership, Uzbek scholars explicitly write about *bosh* carrying the meaning of "management" and being involved in somatic idioms. There is academic consensus across cultures on the importance of this concept.

In conclusion, *head* in English and *bosh* in Uzbek function as semantic centers that illuminate how human beings carve up meaning. They anchor important lexical fields and facilitate a web of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations that are strikingly parallel between the two languages. This comparative analysis reinforces key principles of lexical field theory, in particular, that lexical systems are not arbitrary collections of words, but organized networks structured around shared human experiences. It also shows the value of incorporating cognitive semantics to explain those structures. While English and Uzbek differ in lineage and structure, the case of *head/bosh* reveals common conceptual ground and highlights the delicate interplay between universal embodiment and linguistic convention.

Conclusion

"The Role of "Head" as a Semantic Center in Lexical Fields: English and Uzbek Compared" has been explored through an integrative analysis of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships, grounded in both structural and cognitive semantic theory. We found that the English *head* and Uzbek *bosh* share a core semantic profile: both denote the anatomical head and extend to a wide array of figurative meanings (leader, top, beginning, intellect, life, etc.), effectively serving as a nucleus in multiple lexical fields. The paradigmatic relations of each lexeme show them to be central, unmarked members of their semantic categories (the primary term for "head" itself, a key term for "leader/boss," a reference point for "beginning/top"). Syntagmatically, both *head* and *bosh* are deeply entrenched in each language's phraseology, from everyday collocations ("shake one's head", *bosh chayqamoq*) to proverbs and idioms that

encapsulate cultural values. We observed a high degree of correspondence in idiomatic meanings, illustrating shared conceptual metaphors such as "head = mind, head = leader", and "up (head) = important" across English and Uzbek. At the same time, modest differences in usage highlight how languages can diverge in the peripheral details: certain idioms or connotations attach to *head* in one language but not the other, guided by cultural context (e.g. "big-headed" vs. *dimog'dor*).

The analysis underscores that lexical field theory remains a powerful framework for comparing languages, especially when enriched with cognitive insights. By examining *head/bosh*, we confirmed that semantic fields indeed have internal structure (core vs. periphery) and that a "semantic center" like *head* can organize a field by radiating shared meaning components. Furthermore, the cross-language perspective affirmed that many semantic structures are not language-specific accidents but stem from common human embodiment and cognition, a conclusion well-aligned with cognitive linguistics. The head, as a bodily organ, means and symbolizes similar things to all humans; hence English and Uzbek, despite historical independence, have come to align in many respects on this concept. Where they diverge, the differences inform us about unique semantic shifts or cultural emphases each language has developed.

In practical terms, this research offers insight to linguists, translators, and language learners regarding the interplay of literal and figurative meanings of body-part terms. It cautions against assuming a one-to-one correspondence in all idioms despite a shared core (for instance, not every English "head" expression will translate using *bosh*, and vice versa), while also encouraging leveraging the many parallels as mnemonic bridges. More broadly, it showcases a methodology for lexical semantic comparison that can be applied to other semantic centers (e.g. "heart", "hand") in a similar vein.

All sources cited were drawn from academic literature in English and Uzbek to ensure accuracy and credibility. The convergence of evidence – from lexicographic definitions to phraseological studies, lends confidence to the conclusions. In sum, *head/bosh* exemplify how a single lexeme can be central to a lexicon's structure and a culture's worldview. This comparative study not only deepens our understanding of these two specific languages but also reinforces the linguistic principle that meaning is relational and grounded in our shared human experience.

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