



PRIORITY DIRECTIONS OF MODERN LINGUISTICS AND THEIR RESEARCH OBJECTS

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Abstract: This article examines the paradigm shift occurring in 21st-century linguistics, with particular focus on the transition from a structuralist, system-centered approach to an anthropocentric model that places the human being at the center of linguistic inquiry. The study analyzes the methodological foundations and research objects of five major modern directions: cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, computational and corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. Special attention is given to cognitive linguistics and its central unit — the concept — as well as to linguoculturology and its investigation of language as a carrier of national identity. The role of digital technologies in transforming linguistic research is assessed through an examination of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and the development of the Uzbek Language National Corpus (uzcorpora.uz). The article further explores applied branches such as forensic linguistics and neurolinguistics, highlighting their contribution to solving real-world social and legal problems. The findings demonstrate that contemporary linguistics operates as an integrative science, drawing on psychology, neurology, sociology, and computer science. The article concludes with recommendations for advancing Uzbek linguistics through the harmonization of cognitive and corpus methods and the expansion of AI-based morphological and semantic modeling.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, cognitive linguistics, concept, linguistic worldview, linguoculturology.

Introduction

Language has always been central to human civilization, serving as the primary medium for thought, communication, and the transmission of culture across generations. Traditional linguistics, dominant throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, focused exclusively on the internal structure of language — its phonetic, morphological, and syntactic systems — treating language as a self-contained, static object of analysis. However, by the close of the 20th century, this perspective underwent a fundamental transformation. Language began to be understood not merely as a communication tool, but as a dynamic



cognitive system that shapes human thought, reflects national identity, and adapts to social and technological contexts.

Research aim: To identify and systematically describe the priority directions of modern linguistics and their respective research objects within the contemporary anthropocentric paradigm.

Research objectives: (1) to outline the paradigm shift from traditional to modern linguistics; (2) to analyze the theoretical foundations of cognitive, cultural, computational, social, and psychological directions; (3) to assess their relevance to Uzbek linguistics.

Object of study: The theoretical and methodological foundations of 21st-century linguistic directions.

Subject of study: The research objects, key concepts, and practical applications of modern linguistic directions in the Uzbek linguistic context.

Research methods: Descriptive analysis, comparative method, paradigmatic analysis, and synthesis of theoretical sources.

Table 1. Paradigm comparison in linguistics

Comparison Basis

Traditional Linguistics

Modern (Anthropocentric) Linguistics

Central Object

Internal language system (grammar)

The human being and their cognitive processes

Main Question

How is language structured?

How does a person use and process language?

Approach

Static (fixed rules)

Dynamic (live communication and cognition)

Core Unit

Phoneme, morpheme, word

Concept, discourse, linguocultureme

Key Method

Structural analysis

Cognitive, corpus, and computational analysis

Main Body

1. Cognitive Linguistics: The Connection Between Thought and Language

Cognitive linguistics is one of the leading directions of modern linguistics, studying linguistic phenomena in direct connection with human cognitive activity. It emerged in the 1970s–1980s as a reaction to the formalist tradition,



drawing on the works of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Ronald Langacker. Its foundational claim is that language is not an autonomous faculty but is shaped by general cognitive mechanisms such as perception, attention, memory, and categorization (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The Concept. The central unit of cognitive linguistics is the concept — a complex mental structure encompassing all knowledge, emotions, and experiences associated with a given notion in the human mind. For instance, the concept of Homeland (Vatan) in the Uzbek linguistic worldview extends far beyond a geographical location to include notions of mother, sacred soil, ancestry, and moral obligation (Safarov, 2006).

Conceptual Metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrated that abstract reasoning is structured through metaphor. When speakers say ‘Time is gold,’ they conceptualize the abstract domain of time via the concrete domain of gold, revealing how language reflects deeper cognitive mappings.

The Linguistic Worldview. Every language encodes a unique way of perceiving reality. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and its modern reformulations argue that speakers of different languages categorize the world differently. For example, languages of peoples living in Arctic regions possess dozens of lexemes for types of snow, whereas a single generic term suffices in warm-climate languages (Nurmonov, 2009).

2. Linguoculturology: The Synthesis of Language and Culture

Linguoculturology investigates the relationship between language and cultural identity, examining how national values, beliefs, and historical memory are encoded in linguistic units. As Mahmudov (2012) notes, language is not merely a means of communication but a ‘cultural code’ through which a nation’s worldview is preserved and transmitted.

Linguoculturemes. The primary research objects of this field are linguoculturemes — culturally loaded linguistic units including proverbs, idioms, legends, and national symbols. The Uzbek phrase *oshga marhamat* (welcome to the feast) carries deep connotations of communal solidarity and hospitality that cannot be captured by word-for-word translation.

Paremiology and Phraseology. Proverbs represent a nation’s centuries-old collective wisdom. Contrastive analysis of Uzbek and English proverbs reveals differing cultural attitudes toward family hierarchy, social relations, and moral values. Comparing *Andisha* (Uzbek: social discretion and restraint) with the English concept of Privacy illustrates how culturally embedded values manifest in lexical structure.

3. Computational and Corpus Linguistics: Digital Transformation

Corpus linguistics and computational linguistics represent the intersection of language science and information technology. Their development has



fundamentally changed both how language is studied and how it is processed by machines.

Corpus Linguistics. Corpus linguistics builds and analyzes large electronic databases of authentic texts — literary, scientific, and journalistic — to study real patterns of language use. The Uzbek Language National Corpus (uzcorpora.uz) has opened significant opportunities for frequency analysis of Uzbek vocabulary, lexicographic automation, and the study of stylistic variation across registers (Sayfullayeva, 2010).

Natural Language Processing (NLP). NLP enables machines to understand and generate human language. Technologies such as Google Translate, ChatGPT, and speech recognition systems depend on linguistic theory translated into mathematical models. For Uzbek, NLP development requires specialized morphological analyzers given the language's agglutinative structure, making collaboration between linguists and computer scientists essential.

4. Sociolinguistics and Psycholinguistics

Sociolinguistics examines how language varies and changes across social groups and contexts. Key research areas include dialect variation, generational differences in speech, gender linguistics (the systematic differences between men's and women's language use), and the role of professional jargons. In multilingual societies such as Uzbekistan, sociolinguistics also addresses code-switching and language policy.

Psycholinguistics investigates the mental processes underlying speech production and comprehension: how children acquire language with remarkable speed, how the brain encodes and retrieves lexical items, and how speech disorders such as stuttering or dyslexia can be diagnosed and treated. The field draws heavily on experimental methods, including reaction-time studies and neuroimaging.

5. Applied Directions: Forensic Linguistics and Neurolinguistics

Forensic Linguistics applies linguistic analysis to legal contexts. Practitioners identify the authorship of anonymous texts, analyze whether an utterance constitutes defamation or a criminal threat, and assist in resolving disputes over trademark names. This field has grown in importance as digital communication generates vast quantities of written evidence.

Neurolinguistics studies how language is represented and processed in the brain, focusing on regions such as Broca's area (speech production) and Wernicke's area (language comprehension). Clinical neurolinguistics provides scientific explanations for aphasia — the loss of language ability following stroke or brain injury — and develops evidence-based rehabilitation methods (Mahmudov, 2012).



Conclusion

Analysis of the major directions of modern linguistics confirms that 21st-century language science has fundamentally reoriented itself from the study of language as a static formal system to an investigation of language as a dynamic, human-centered phenomenon. Four key conclusions emerge:

- Primacy of the human factor: Language is inseparable from cognition and culture. The cognitive approach has enriched linguistics with tools for analyzing the ‘linguistic worldview’ and the conceptual architecture underlying speech.

- National-cultural identity: Linguoculturological research into Uzbek paremiological heritage and linguoculturemes serves not only as scholarship but as a vehicle for promoting Uzbek national values in the international academic community.

- Digital transformation: The Uzbek Language National Corpus and advancing NLP technologies are strategic assets for ensuring the competitiveness of Uzbek in the global information environment.

- Integrative science: The convergence of linguistics with psychology, neuroscience, sociology, and computer science has produced applied fields capable of addressing concrete social, legal, and clinical challenges.

To advance Uzbek linguistics further, it is recommended to harmonize cognitive and corpus methodologies, to expand AI-based modeling of Uzbek morphology and semantics, and to increase international collaboration. Such efforts will strengthen both the theoretical foundations of the discipline and the global prestige of the Uzbek language.

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