

## Lacunae in the Uzbek language: Semantic and linguocultural dimensions

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines lacunae in the Uzbek language from semantic and linguoculturological perspectives, focusing on their role in encoding culturally specific meanings. Lacunae are defined as lexical, semantic, or conceptual gaps that occur when a linguistic unit in one language lacks a direct equivalent in another, often due to differences in cultural experience, cognitive categorization, or communicative practices. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, drawing on data from Uzbek literary texts, lexicographic sources, and cross-linguistic comparisons to identify and analyze representative examples of lacunae. The findings indicate that the Uzbek language exhibits a wide range of lacunae, including subjective, communicative, textual, and cultural types. These lacunae reflect culturally embedded values, social relations, and conceptual structures that are integral to the Uzbek linguistic worldview. In translation contexts, such lacunae cannot be adequately rendered through direct lexical substitution and are typically addressed through descriptive translation, explication, or contextual reformulation. This resistance to simplification underscores the close relationship between linguistic form and cultural meaning. The study also clarifies the conceptual distinction between lacunae and realia, arguing that lacunae represent systemic absences within a linguistic or semantic framework, whereas realia refer to culturally specific objects or phenomena with established referential status. By addressing this distinction, the study contributes to terminological precision in lacunology and related fields. Overall, the research enhances understanding of the interaction between language and culture and offers insights relevant to translation studies, intercultural communication, and language documentation.

**Keywords:** Culture; lacuna, lexicon; linguoculturology; semantics

**Received:**

25 August 2025

**Accepted:**

20 January 2026

**Revised:**

16 December 2025

**Published:**

30 January 2026

**How to cite (in APA style):**

Usarov, J. E., Axmadjonov, D.B. Saidov, U.R., Abdirimova, I. K., Muratova, N. B., Muxtorova, S. M., Komilova, G. T., & Allayarova, S.U. (2026). Lacunae in the Uzbek language: Semantic and linguocultural dimensions. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 15(2), 573-581. <https://doi.org/10.17509/mbqjwg72>

### INTRODUCTION

This study of the Uzbek Language provides a detailed examination of lacunae. A key part of the argument for building the study is a preliminary observation that the study of language has long been

dominated by analyses of how words in certain languages reflect and shape cultural reality (Kachur, 2021). However, Sternin (2003) and Eynullaeva (2003) found that in recent decades, linguists have

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increasingly recognized that lexical equivalence across languages is not always possible due to deeply embedded cultural, conceptual, and pragmatic differences. It is especially true for particular languages, which are characterized by lacunae, i.e., linguistic or cultural gaps where a word or concept exists in one language but has no direct equivalent in another (Danilchenko, 2010). In terminology, lacunae originate from the Latin word *lacuna*, meaning a cavity, hole, or unfilled space. In relation to linguistic and cultural studies, it has come to denote a semantic or conceptual gap in one language that lacks an equivalent in another (Danilchenko, 2010). The study of lacunae is developed in response to challenges encountered in translation, intercultural communication, and comparative linguistics, where specific terms, idioms, or concepts could not be rendered accurately across languages (Florin & Vlahov, 1980).

One of the earliest implicit recognitions of lacunar phenomena was documented by Navoi (2000) in *Muhokamatul Lugatayn*, where he compared the Turkic and Persian languages and found that certain Turkic terms, such as қобурға, қатлама, and қурт, had no equivalents in Persian. These observations reflected an early awareness of the cultural specificity embedded in language, even if the term “lacunae” was not yet in use. In the next iteration, research in contemporary linguistics showed that the interpretation of lacunae has shifted from a narrow lexical perspective to a broader cognitive and cultural view. For example, Sternin and Bykova (1998) noted that lacunae can occur at multiple levels, including lexical, grammatical, stylistic, cultural, and pragmatic. Lexical lacunae refer to missing vocabulary items, while grammatical lacunae may involve differences in tense, aspect, or syntactic structures. Stylistic lacunae emerge when two languages differ significantly in tone or rhetorical conventions. Finally, cultural lacunae relate to specific artifacts, values, or behaviors that are deeply rooted in one culture and unfamiliar in another (Eynullaeva, 2003).

As a linguistic phenomenon, lacunae represent more than simple lexical omissions; they indicate the presence of culturally unique experiences, values, and social practices that are not codified in the lexicon of another language (Florin & Vlahov, 1980). These units often emerge in intercultural communication, literary translation, and comparative linguistics, where the limits of equivalence became apparent (Hale, 1975; Muravyov, 1975). In these contexts, lacunae must be resolved through paraphrase, explanation, or contextual adaptation, yet such solutions frequently failed to convey the full semantic and cultural depth of the original term (Karau, 1982; 1991). Therefore, in some cases, lacunae are often conflated with realia.

Unlike lacunae, however, realia are defined as objects or practices specific to one culture that lack analogues in another culture (Florin & Vlahov, 1980). Realia are mostly referred to as tangible entities, whereas lacunae concern conceptual or lexical absence. However, Khasanov (2021) clarified that while realia denote tangible foreign elements (e.g., Russian samovar), lacunae represent conceptual absences (e.g., Uzbek *qattiq qalb* for “stubborn,” lacking a direct English counterpart). According to his framework, lacunae referred to concepts that existed in cognition but lacked lexical representation, while realia denoted objects or customs foreign to the target culture. The practical implications of lacunae are evident in translation. When German author G. Karau used *Magenbitter* in *Doppelspiel im Untergrund*, Russian translators preserved the term with a footnote rather than imposing an inexact substitute (Karau, 1982/1991)—a strategy that acknowledges untranslatability while retaining cultural authenticity. Further nuance was added by Filatov (2020), who distinguished between complete and incomplete lacunae. Complete lacunae occur when a particular concept, even if known to another culture, has no lexical expression in its standard language usage. Incomplete lacunae, by contrast, involve synonymous or descriptive substitutes, though these often lack the full pragmatic, emotional, or cultural weight of the original (Filatov, 2020). He further exemplified this by categorizing lacunae as complete or total untranslatability, such as German *Schadenfreude*, or as incomplete or partial equivalence, such as Russian *тоска* rendered as “melancholy”. This classification had practical relevance for translators and language educators attempting to preserve meaning while ensuring intelligibility.

From a macro viewpoint, research in linguoculturology and semantic analysis has shown that languages encode specific worldviews through their lexicons (Sternin & Bykova, 1998; Paz, 1987). A part of the analysis in this type of research includes the encoding process, which created gaps when two languages attempted to represent each other’s cultural realities. Lacunar units, in particular, illustrated how linguistic forms were intimately connected to cultural contexts. While some concepts were universally understood, others were highly localized and culturally bound, leading to asymmetries in meaning representation (Hasanov, 2021). Further, Muravyov (1975) identified lexical lacunae in which everyday concepts expressed in one language lacked counterparts in the other. He classified these into random and systematic lacunae, depending on their recurrence and impact on communication. Similarly, Barkhudarov introduced the idea of non-equivalent vocabulary, stressing the translator’s role in bridging lexical gaps through context-based strategies (as cited in Florin &

Vlakhov, 1980). In another context, Hale (1975), working with Australian Aboriginal languages, highlighted how cultural and environmental specificity influenced language structure and lexical choices. He coined the term “gaps in grammar and culture” to describe the incommensurability between languages that arose not from a lack of expression, but from differing worldviews and social organization.

Overall, lacunae illuminate the boundaries of language and thought. From Navoi’s medieval observations to modern terminological gaps, their study underscores a timeless truth: translation is not merely about words, but about bridging worlds. Today, lacunae research informs pedagogy and terminology development. Abdirimova (2025) and Akhlan et al. (2024) advocate teaching lacunae in language curricula to foster intercultural competence. Meanwhile, Saidov (2023–2024) documents professional lacunae in Uzbek, such as the use of technology and medical terms borrowed without adaptation. His work highlights a pressing need: proactive terminology development that balances global relevance with cultural precision. This study scrutinizes lacunae in Uzbek, many of which have been observed in both oral and written language, especially in areas related to traditional practices, social relationships, and metaphorical expressions (Navoi, 2000; Saidov, 2023). The significance of selecting Uzbek as the main language is based on Usarov et al.’s (2024) research, which shows that lexemes unique to Uzbek often lack equivalents in neighboring or global languages, despite their geographical or historical proximity. They also argued that lacunar phenomena in Uzbek revealed the distinctiveness of the Uzbek worldview and highlighted the limitations of literal translation and cross-cultural equivalence.

In previous studies, Uzbek has been used as the data source, for example, to categorize lacunae into several types: subjective, communicative, textual, and cultural (Sternin & Bykova, 1998; Filatov, 2020). These classifications provided a foundation for identifying the scope and function of lacunar expressions in the Uzbek language. In Uzbek linguistics, Hasanov (2021) emphasized the dialectal roots of lexical lacunae, particularly in how regional expressions and idioms often remained undocumented or underused in standard language. He argued that many concepts were part of the cultural consciousness of Uzbek speakers but were not formalized lexically. These internal lacunae were especially prominent in rural dialects and oral traditions. However, little research has systematically examined the overlap among lacunae and related concepts such as realia, semantic non-equivalence, and cultural untranslatability (Khasanov, 2021; Suyunov, 2022). Moreover, most existing literature has focused on major world languages, leaving a gap in the documentation and

analysis of lacunae in Central Asian linguistic contexts (Narimbetova, 2020; Tursunov & Narimbetova, 2023). This study aims to explore the phenomenon of lacunae in the Uzbek language from both semantic and linguoculturological perspectives. It seeks to identify and classify lacunar units across different domains, examine their cultural and communicative significance, and distinguish them from closely related concepts. By analyzing literary texts, dictionaries, and cross-linguistic comparisons, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how lacunae reflected the cognitive, emotional, and cultural identity of the Uzbek people (Abdirimova, 2025). The novelty of this research lies in its focus on an underexplored linguistic context and its attempt to provide a typological and conceptual framework for analyzing lacunae within and across languages. The study contributes to translation studies, lexicography, intercultural communication, and language pedagogy by emphasizing the role of lacunae as markers of linguistic richness and cultural specificity.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method, with document-based analysis and semantic comparison, to explore lacunar units in the Uzbek language from semantic and linguocultural perspectives. The design was suitable for the research, as the objectives were to identify, classify, and describe systematically and clearly the use of lacunae in the Uzbek language and their linguocultural meanings by using textual evidence and lexicographic sources. To triangulate and support reliable identification of Uzbek lacunae, data for the study were collected from three primary sources, namely (1) the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language (Torakulov et al., 1996; Saidov, 2023), (2) a selection of Uzbek literary texts from the 20th and 21st centuries authored by writers such as Alisher Navoi, and (3) comparative bilingual dictionaries involving Uzbek and other languages such as Russian, Persian, and English (Florin & Vlakhov, 1980; Navoi, 2000). The Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language (Torakulov et al., 1996; Saidov, 2023) was initially employed to delineate conventional Uzbek semantic boundaries, lexicalization patterns, and usage annotations as foundational semantic evidence. Then, an edited collection of Uzbek literary texts was examined to see how candidate items fit into the larger picture. This reason made it possible to understand culturally embedded meanings, social relationships, and discourse functions that cannot be fully understood from dictionary definitions alone. Lastly, the Uzbek–Russian, Uzbek–Persian, and Uzbek–English bilingual dictionaries were checked to determine whether each item had a single-word equivalent, a near equivalent, or an explanatory

paraphrase. This provided systematic evidence of lacunarity and provided an understanding of translation strategies.

In the data analysis, the primary analysis was focused on lexical items and culturally embedded expressions that lacked direct equivalents in other languages. Approximately 30 Uzbek terms were purposively selected for their uniqueness, cultural specificity, and lack of straightforward lexical counterparts. Each term was analyzed semantically, morphologically, and contextually. The analysis followed the typological framework of Sternin and Bykova (1998), which categorized lacunae into subjective, communicative, textual, and cultural types. Additional criteria included translatability, semantic opacity, and cultural anchoring. The classification of lacunar units was conducted through semantic field analysis and contextual interpretation, drawing on examples from Uzbek literary discourse and cultural narratives. In addition, realia were identified and differentiated based on the criteria proposed by Khasanov (2021) and Filatov (2020), ensuring that lacunae were not conflated with culturally unique material artifacts. In addressing the other issue, i.e., cultural and communicative significance, cultural validity was ensured by consulting with native Uzbek speakers, including university linguists and cultural practitioners. The consultation aims to clarify and interpret contextually ambiguous. These triangulated perspectives strengthened data classification and provided additional cultural insight into the depth and use of each lacunar item.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The phenomenon of lacunae in the Uzbek language embodies not only linguistic gaps but also cultural and cognitive asymmetries that arise in intercultural communication. Lacunae are not merely missing words; they represent complex, often untranslatable, cultural concepts that are deeply embedded in national consciousness. This study reveals the semantic, stylistic, and cultural dimensions of lacunar units, classifying them and providing examples that highlight the uniqueness of Uzbek linguoculture. The concept of lacunar units is a concept related to linguoculturology. Since the term is, first of all, a word, it covers the values of the people, national-cultural relations, and the assessment of the disease. As for lacunar units, we see that there are concepts related to this term in the literature, that it is used in some sources in combination with realia, and that the term and realia are evaluated by some scientists as interrelated concepts. Realities include words and phrases denoting objects specific to the life of one people (lifestyle, culture, social and historical development) and alien to another people, reflecting national and historical colours and usually not having equivalent words in other languages.

## **Lacunar Units Across Different Domains**

Following Sternin and Bykova (1998), foundational analysis in the study divided lacunae into internal and interlingual types. Internal lacunae exist within a single language and refer to the absence of a lexical unit that would describe a familiar concept. Interlingual lacunae, on the other hand, refer to the absence of equivalent lexical units in another language during translation or cross-linguistic comparison. This framework provides the foundation for our analysis. Further subclassifications include complete lacunae, where no equivalent exists at all, and incomplete lacunae, where some partial, approximate representation is available, often with added connotative or stylistic nuance (Filatov, 2020).

Before proceeding to describe lacunae across different domains, it is important to draw a clear line between lacunae and realia, which becomes a definitional boundary. A critical discussion in the literature concerns the confusion between lacunae and realia. According to Khasanov (2021), the two terms describe different phenomena. A lacuna is a concept that exists culturally but lacks verbal expression, while realia refer to objects or phenomena that exist physically and culturally in one language but are absent in another, both semantically and lexically (Khasanov, 2021). Our data provides some useful examples to clarify this.

For instance, in terms of distinction between realia and lacunae, some samples are obtained from the lexeme on food. *қўмач* (ash-baked dough) is considered realia, as it is a food item specific to Uzbek tradition and does not exist in other cultures. It cannot be categorized as lacunae, because the term denotes both a real object and a known concept, even if untranslatable. By contrast, a word like *қумқулоқ*, which means sharp-minded or literally sand-eared, may be considered a lacuna, as it encapsulates a conceptual metaphor that is not shared or lexicalized elsewhere. Using lacunae and realia as synonyms, which is sometimes done in translation literature, can blur analytical precision and misrepresent the linguistic richness of both phenomena. As the article notes, lacunae represent a “gap,” an absence of lexicalization, while realia represent cultural exclusivity, with presence in one but absence in another (Suyunov, 2022).

While much attention in lacunae studies has been directed toward interlingual gaps, the Uzbek language also exhibits internal lacunae—concepts that exist among speakers or in cultural practice but remain unlexicalized or only regionally recognized. According to Sternin (2003), these are linguistic phenomena that exist cognitively or socially within a speech community but have not been standardized lexically in the literary form of the language. Examples from the article include lexemes such as *иллаки*, *калчик*, *қучуқламоқ*, *пичма*, and *жартилламоқ*. These represent linguistic

potentialities—concepts that could be codified but remain informal, dialectal, or contextually bound (Saidov, 2023; Hasanov, 2021). In many cases, such internal lacunae reflect the dynamism of oral tradition and regional variation, which are not always integrated into dictionaries or formal discourse. This raises questions about lexical policy and standardization in the Uzbek language. There should be a consideration of whether or not linguistic authorities can actively include culturally rich, though underused, terms into standardized dictionaries. Another possibility is to keep them flexible, allowing language to evolve organically. Overall, the challenge lies in recognizing the value of vernacular richness without undermining clarity or unity in standard language practices.

Another layer of the discussion involves cognitive linguistics and ethnopsycholinguistics. Lacunae are not simply about missing words; they reflect gaps in worldview, differences in categorization, and cultural priorities. As noted by Hale (1975) in his comparison of Australian Aboriginal and English-speaking communities, lacunae also stem from incommensurability—when cultures literally see and conceptualize the world differently. This idea is supported by the observation that even basic categories, such as family relations or environmental features, may be divided, named, and understood differently in different cultures. In our data about the Uzbek context, for example, words for kinship, spiritual experiences, or specific social interactions (*отаона розилиги, ҳақ қилиши, дуо олиши*) may have no exact equivalents in other languages, because they are based on Islamic ethical frameworks and Central Asian communal norms. These cultural concepts can be explained, but not translated, without losing their embedded spiritual and emotional significance (Usarov et al., 2024). Moreover, many of these terms are tied to culturally specific mental constructs, such as collective responsibility, elder reverence, and spirituality in everyday life. Their lexical representation—or lack thereof—in other languages reveals not only gaps in vocabulary but also differences in cultural cognition and emotional encoding.

A significant insight from recent Uzbek linguistics research (Saidov, 2023; 2024) is that lacunae also emerge in the development of professional terminology. In fields like medicine, education, law, and engineering, imported or foreign concepts often face challenges when being localized in Uzbek. This is due to either the absence of an established equivalent or the use of borrowed Russian or international terms that do not resonate culturally or semantically with Uzbek-speaking professionals. For example, terms like *гендер, мотивация, компетенция*, while present in academic texts, often exist in semantic tension with traditional Uzbek equivalents or lack culturally

rooted synonyms altogether. The result is a form of semantic borrowing without integration, where the term is used but not fully “owned” by the language. This scenario creates functional lacunae—concepts in use but not yet fully localized linguistically.

One proposed solution, as seen in the work of Abdirimova (2025), is to develop project-based lexical integration in education. That is, students and educators co-construct terminologies that fit both the scientific logic and the national-linguistic framework. Such efforts may help reduce terminological lacunae and reinvigorate cultural ownership of modern concepts.

In another light, lacunae are accounted for in terms of translation strategies, which potentially have pedagogical implications. The presence of lacunae poses significant challenges for language learners, translators, and educators. It may become an aspect to consider how some languages should be taught or translated when the language concept has no counterpart in the learner’s mother tongue. In this case, explication is a possible approach, that is, when a term is explained descriptively, for example, an Uzbek word of *қатлама* may be described in length into a layered Uzbek pastry made by folding and frying dough. Another is language preservation with annotation, where the original term is retained and followed by a footnote or brief explanation, for example, *манту*, which means steamed dumplings common in Central Asia. Pedagogically, this calls for the development of intercultural awareness and tolerance of ambiguity. Rather than seeking exact translation, learners and readers must be trained to navigate untranslatability as an inherent part of linguistic and cultural difference. This aligns with the educational philosophy advanced by Abdirimova (2025), who emphasizes project activities as a way to help students engage with abstract cultural knowledge through experiential tasks.

### **Communicative and Cultural Significance of Lacunae**

The overarching finding in the present study indicates the existence of subjective lacunae and cultural semantics. Subjective lacunae reflect the internalized value systems, traditions, and cognitive schemas of a linguistic community. In the Uzbek language, many such lacunae are tied to familial structures, social roles, and emotional expressions. For instance, words such as *қўқим* (fine, dusty powder), *қапча* (a narrow waist), and *мильмиллатмоқ* (to simmer gently) evoke specific sensory or visual experiences that are common in Uzbek daily life but are unfamiliar to non-native speakers. These terms are not merely descriptive—they are culturally connotative and often linked to traditional practices or environment (Hasanov, 2021).

Another example includes the word *мильмиллатмоқ*, for example, which conveys a very

specific culinary action familiar to Uzbek cooking but not captured in broader culinary vocabularies in other languages. To translate this word, one would need a phrase like “to let something simmer slowly at low heat until it bubbles softly,” which may describe the act but loses the cultural context in which the term exists. Such richness of semantic content that cannot be translated directly demonstrates how language is bound to perception and habitus. This supports the assertion that each culture, each language sees this world in its own way and is a separate world in itself (Paz, 1987). In this sense, lacunae serve as linguistic evidence of different worldviews and experiences.

Communicative lacunae are observed in everyday discourse, hinting at their roles in social interaction and pragmatics. Examples in this regard include gaps in greetings, address forms, honorifics, and rituals of communication. In Uzbek, the use of expressions like *ота-она дуосини олмоқ* (to earn the blessing of parents) or *узр сўрамоқ* (to formally seek forgiveness) involves more than pragmatic politeness—they reflect moral and spiritual dimensions deeply rooted in Islamic and Central Asian cultural traditions. Efforts in translating these into English, consequently, yield only superficial equivalents, such as “get parental approval” or “apologize,” both of which miss the spiritual gravity and interpersonal ethics encoded in the Uzbek expression. As Sternin (2003) notes, communicative lacunae can disrupt intercultural interaction when a speaker assumes direct equivalency between expressions without recognizing their cultural depth and function. The differences in speech behavior, such as indirectness in refusal, verbal humility, and euphemistic avoidance, illustrate communicative gaps that may seem confusing or illogical in other cultures. For example, in Uzbek speech acts, to say “Insha’Allah” (God willing) may sometimes act as a polite, non-committal refusal. In cultures where direct affirmation or negation is expected, this might be misinterpreted (Saidov, 2024).

When presented in bigger chunks, textual lacunae appear prominently in literary texts, folk tales, and oral traditions, where idiomatic or poetic expressions convey layered meanings unique to the source culture. The works of Alisher Navoi, for example, provide early documentation of this phenomenon. In *Muhokamat-ul Lugatayn* (“Debate of Two Languages”), Navoi discusses Turkic words that lack Persian equivalents, such as *қобурға* (rib), *қатлама* (layered pastry), *қурут* (dried yogurt), and *манту* (dumplings), asserting their cultural specificity (Navoi, 2000). This phenomenon, even without using the term “lacunae,” is already conceptualized in Navoi’s work, where he implicitly identifies national-linguistic pride through lexical uniqueness. These terms often carry cultural memory and culinary identity that cannot be adequately expressed in Persian or other regional

languages. This supports the claim by Florin and Vlachov that such untranslatable terms embody cultural heritage and are more than just linguistic anomalies (Florin & Vlachov, 1980). Further examples are found in German literature, as demonstrated in G. Karau’s novel *Doppelspiel im Untergrund*, where the word *Magenbitter* is used as a culturally embedded term with no exact Russian equivalent. The translator was compelled to retain the original term while appending a gloss, translating it as “a bitter tincture made from medicinal herbs for the stomach” (Karau, 1982; 1991). This strategy, often used in translation studies, reflects the linguistic strategies for resolving lacunae through description, adaptation, or preservation of realia.

Another important role of lacunae is being markers of cultural distance. As emphasized by Florin and Vlachov (1980), lacunae are not problems to be eliminated, but phenomena to be understood and respected. They serve as natural boundaries that mark cultural uniqueness. The term lacunae, in its broader philosophical and humanitarian sense, embodies diversity, incompatibility, and cognitive difference. For instance, the use of *қатлама*, *манту*, *қурут*, and *улоба* not only marks specific culinary traditions but also signals a shared historical memory among Turkic peoples (Navoi, 2000). These terms are repositories of identity, and even when their referents are translated or described in other languages, the original term often retains more emotional and cultural weight. It is for this reason that many scholars, including Paz (1987), advocate for the preservation of such terms in translation, either through transliteration, glossing, or strategic non-translation. This allows readers or interlocutors in the target language to recognize the existence of difference, and in doing so, acknowledge the integrity of the source culture.

Despite the growing body of literature on lacunae, there remains no universally accepted theoretical model that demarcates the boundaries between related concepts such as lacunae, realia, semantic gap, non-equivalence, and cultural untranslatability. Some scholars treat these terms interchangeably, while others argue for fine distinctions that are essential for theoretical and practical clarity (Danilchenko, 2010; Eynullaeva, 2003). In this context, the present article affirms the position of A. Hasanov (2021) proposes a hierarchical view, where non-equivalence functions as a hypernym encompassing both lacunae and realia. In his framework, a clear demarcation of lacunae and realia is drawn. Lacunae refers to a concept that exists mentally or culturally but lacks lexical expression in a given language. On the other hand, realia refers to an object or phenomenon that exists materially and conceptually in one culture, but has no counterpart at all in another. For instance,

*чак-чук* (sound made when clicking tongue as part of communication) can be considered a lacuna, as it represents an internal cultural cue that lacks standard lexicalization in other languages. In contrast, *қурғун* (dried yogurt balls) are realia—physical cultural items that require explanation rather than translation. This definitional clarity is not merely academic; it holds significant implications for lexicography, translation theory, intercultural education, and AI language processing. When developing bilingual dictionaries, educational glossaries, or translation models, failure to differentiate between lacunae and realia may lead to semantic flattening or cultural erasure, reducing the accuracy and depth of cross-linguistic representation. With that being said, the present study infers that it is urgent to create a unified framework for lacunae for standard measurement.

Finally, one of the most important roles of lacunae is as a mirror of linguistic identity and national consciousness. Language does not exist in a vacuum—it is embedded in social structures, historical experience, and psychological orientations. The presence of lacunae is itself evidence of the diversity of worldviews, the richness of national imagery, and the cognitive independence of speech communities. As noted by Sternin and Bykova (1998), the picture of the world constructed by a linguistic community is reflected in both what is said and what remains unsaid. The gaps in one language, therefore, are not signs of deficiency but of difference. Uzbek, like many culturally rich languages, carries in its lacunae echoes of oral history, shared emotion, local knowledge, and ancestral wisdom. For example, the word *кайпанг*, which means a nuanced state of groggy relaxation, may be difficult to translate into English not because English lacks emotional vocabulary, but because this particular experience is culturally contextualized—perhaps tied to rural settings, post-meal rest, or seasonal affective states. Such examples are emotionally potent and semantically dense, resisting simplification. This supports the idea that lacunar units are not obstacles to understanding but invitations to cultural empathy. They provide an opportunity to reflect on one's language limitations and to approach foreign cultures with humility and openness.

## CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of lacunae in the Uzbek language illustrates the profound connection between language, culture, and cognition. These linguistic gaps are not simple omissions but reflect deeply rooted cultural meanings, emotional nuances, and conceptual frameworks that shape how a community perceives and describes the world.

At the lexical level, lacunae reveal the creative capacity of the Uzbek language to express

experiences and realities unique to its cultural setting. There are words that are not observed in either the words of the borrowed layer or in the units of the native layer. These are concepts that have names in the literary language or terminology. In science, this phenomenon is known as the phenomenon of *lacuna*, and the units are called *lacunar units*. Words and expressions that have no equivalents in other languages serve as evidence of how language encodes distinctive sensory, social, and emotional dimensions of life. The classification of lacunae into subjective, communicative, textual, and cultural types provides a comprehensive lens through which to understand their role in shaping communication and cultural identity. Each type offers insight into how different aspects of life are perceived, interpreted, and conveyed through language.

A clear distinction between lacunae and realia is essential for accurate linguistic analysis. While both indicate the absence of direct equivalents in other languages, they arise from different sources (conceptual versus material) and require different approaches for understanding and interpretation. Internal lacunae further demonstrate the dynamic nature of the Uzbek language. Concepts that exist in everyday life but are not yet formalized in standard usage reflect the richness and evolution of linguistic expression within the culture itself. It is appropriate to evaluate lacunary units as a linguistic phenomenon that shows the internal capabilities of the language and serves to demonstrate the vocabulary (reserve) of each people, as well as national culture, linguacultural studies, and its specific features.

The presence of lacunae has important implications for translation, language education, and cross-cultural communication. They challenge us to look beyond literal word-for-word correspondence and to engage more deeply with the cultural and emotional significance embedded in language. Ultimately, lacunae are not signs of deficiency but of cultural uniqueness. They represent the invisible threads that tie language to identity, worldview, and collective memory. Studying these units allows us to better appreciate the diversity of human expression and to promote a more empathetic and nuanced understanding of different linguistic and cultural communities. Lacunar units reflect the national culture of the Uzbek people, as well as all Turkic peoples, word forms in their language, sound structure, and methods of word formation, etc. Also, their etymological bases embody such concepts as people's way of life, customs, traditions, attitude to reality, mental consciousness, perception, and language abilities.

The present study on lacunae in the Uzbek language has pedagogical, technological, and sociolinguistic relevance. In language teaching, understanding lacunae can aid in developing cross-

cultural curricula that acknowledge and explain untranslatable terms. In computational linguistics, the phenomenon challenges machine translation systems that rely on lexical equivalence. These systems often fail to detect or handle culturally embedded meanings, resulting in output that is technically accurate but semantically impoverished. Future research may consider exploring the role of lacunae in emerging Uzbek slang or youth language. Also, it will be interesting to investigate how social media and globalization affect the emergence or erosion of lacunar units. Other research in the area may include the psycholinguistic processing of lacunae in bilingual speakers and the use of lacunar units in Uzbek poetry, music lyrics, and cinema. By systematically cataloguing and interpreting lacunar expressions, scholars can contribute to preserving linguistic heritage, supporting more accurate translations, and fostering greater mutual understanding across cultures.

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