



THE SEMANTIC AND CULTURAL-LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article investigates the semantic and cultural-linguistic characteristics of phraseological units in Uzbek and English. Phraseological units are regarded as an essential component of a language's lexical system, reflecting the historical experience, cultural values, and worldview of a speech community. The study aims to identify similarities and differences in the semantic structure, figurative meaning, and cultural connotations of phraseological units in both languages. A comparative and descriptive approach is employed to analyze selected phraseological units, focusing on metaphorical imagery, national mentality, and culturally specific references. The findings reveal that while many phraseological units in Uzbek and English share universal semantic patterns related to human emotions, behavior, and social relations, significant differences arise from cultural, historical, and religious backgrounds. Uzbek phraseological units often reflect collectivism, moral values, and traditional lifestyles, whereas English phraseological units tend to emphasize individualism and pragmatic attitudes. The research highlights the importance of cultural competence in understanding and translating phraseological units and contributes to contrastive linguistics and intercultural communication studies.

Key words: phraseological units, semantics, cultural linguistics, Uzbek language, English language.

Introduction

Language is not merely a system of grammatical rules and lexical units; it is a dynamic reflection of a nation's culture, history, traditions, and collective worldview. One of the most vivid linguistic phenomena that embodies this close relationship between language and culture is phraseology. Phraseological units, also known as idioms or fixed expressions, occupy a special place in the lexical system of any language due to their figurative meaning, semantic integrity, and cultural specificity. They function not only as expressive linguistic tools but also as carriers of national identity and cultural memory. Therefore, the study of phraseological units from a semantic and



cultural-linguistic perspective has become an important area of modern linguistics [9, 118]. In recent decades, increased attention has been paid to the interdisciplinary study of language and culture, particularly within the frameworks of cultural linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and contrastive linguistics. Phraseological units are considered especially valuable for such studies because their meanings often cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of their components. Instead, they are deeply rooted in cultural experience, historical events, customs, beliefs, and social norms. As a result, phraseological units provide insight into how speakers of a particular language conceptualize the world around them and express abstract notions such as emotions, morality, social relations, and human behavior.

The Uzbek and English languages belong to different language families and represent distinct cultural and historical backgrounds. Uzbek, a Turkic language, has developed under the influence of nomadic traditions, Islamic values, Eastern philosophy, and centuries-old folklore. English, a Germanic language, has evolved within a Western cultural context shaped by Christianity, industrialization, colonial expansion, and modern globalization. These differences are clearly reflected in the phraseological systems of the two languages. While both Uzbek and English contain a rich variety of idiomatic expressions, their semantic structures and cultural connotations often differ significantly. This makes a comparative study of phraseological units in these languages both relevant and necessary. From a semantic point of view, phraseological units are characterized by stability, reproducibility, and idiomaticity. Their meanings are usually figurative and holistic, meaning that the overall sense of the expression cannot be understood by analyzing its individual components separately. For example, English phraseological units such as “spill the beans” or “break the ice” and Uzbek expressions like “ko‘ziga tuproq sepmoq” or “tishini tishiga qo‘ymoq” demonstrate how metaphor and imagery are used to convey complex meanings concisely. However, despite certain universal semantic patterns, the imagery and symbolism underlying these expressions are culture-specific and reflect the lived experiences of the respective speech communities [3, 45].

The cultural-linguistic aspect of phraseological units is particularly important in comparative studies because idioms often encode national mentality and cultural values. Uzbek phraseological units frequently emphasize collectivism, respect for elders, moral integrity, patience, and social harmony. Many expressions are connected with agricultural life, family relations, and traditional customs. In contrast, English phraseological units often reflect individualism, pragmatism, emotional restraint, and personal responsibility. Such differences highlight the role of culture in shaping semantic meaning and



linguistic expression. Moreover, phraseological units pose significant challenges in translation and intercultural communication. Literal translation of idioms often leads to semantic distortion or complete loss of meaning. A phraseological unit in one language may have no direct equivalent in another language, or it may require a culturally adapted expression to convey the same pragmatic effect. For this reason, understanding the semantic and cultural-linguistic characteristics of phraseological units is essential for translators, language learners, and scholars engaged in cross-cultural communication [1, 68]. Despite the growing interest in phraseology, comparative studies focusing specifically on Uzbek and English phraseological units remain relatively limited. Many existing works concentrate on European languages or analyze phraseological units solely from a structural or semantic perspective, without sufficient attention to cultural factors. This research seeks to address this gap by providing a comparative analysis of phraseological units in Uzbek and English, emphasizing both their semantic features and cultural-linguistic significance.

The main objective of this study is to examine how phraseological units in Uzbek and English reflect cultural values, national worldview, and semantic patterns. The research aims to identify common and distinctive features in the use of metaphor, symbolism, and imagery in both languages. By analyzing selected phraseological units, the study demonstrates how language serves as a cultural code and how idiomatic expressions function as linguistic representations of collective experience.

In addition, this article contributes to the broader field of contrastive linguistics by highlighting the interaction between language and culture in phraseology. It underscores the importance of integrating cultural analysis into semantic studies and emphasizes the role of phraseological units as key elements of linguistic and cultural competence. Ultimately, the findings of this research may be applied in language teaching, translation studies, and intercultural communication, helping learners and practitioners better understand the deep cultural meanings embedded in idiomatic expressions [11, 23].

Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative and comparative research methodology to investigate the semantic and cultural-linguistic characteristics of phraseological units in Uzbek and English. Given the complex and multidimensional nature of phraseology, an interdisciplinary approach combining semantic analysis, cultural linguistics, and contrastive linguistics is employed. This methodological framework allows for a deeper understanding



of how phraseological units encode meaning, cultural values, and national worldview in both languages.

The first stage of the research involves the selection of phraseological units. The corpus of data is compiled from authoritative phraseological dictionaries, explanatory dictionaries, and academic linguistic sources in both Uzbek and English. Uzbek phraseological units are selected from classical and modern lexicographic works, as well as from literary texts and folklore sources, while English phraseological units are drawn from established idiom dictionaries and contemporary language corpora. The selection criteria include semantic opacity, figurativeness, frequency of use, and cultural relevance. Only stable and widely recognized phraseological units are included to ensure the reliability and representativeness of the data [5, 12].

In the second stage, a descriptive method is applied to analyze the structural and semantic features of the selected phraseological units. Each unit is examined as a whole, with particular attention paid to its figurative meaning, lexical components, and semantic integrity. This step focuses on identifying whether the meaning of a phraseological unit is fully idiomatic or partially motivated by its components. Such an approach is essential, as phraseological meaning often emerges from metaphorical or metonymic associations rather than from literal interpretation [10, 140].

The third stage involves semantic classification of phraseological units according to thematic and conceptual domains. The units are grouped into categories such as emotions, character traits, social relations, moral values, labor, and daily life. This classification makes it possible to identify recurring semantic patterns and conceptual metaphors in both languages. By comparing these categories, the study reveals universal semantic tendencies as well as language-specific preferences shaped by cultural experience. For instance, expressions related to patience, honor, and community are more prominent in Uzbek phraseology, whereas English phraseological units frequently emphasize independence, practicality, and emotional self-control.

A crucial component of the methodology is the application of cultural-linguistic analysis. This method examines phraseological units as cultural signs that reflect traditions, beliefs, historical events, and collective mentality. Cultural references embedded in phraseological units - such as elements related to religion, nature, traditional occupations, or social hierarchy - are analyzed to determine their role in shaping meaning. This approach is based on the assumption that language functions as a repository of cultural knowledge and that phraseological units preserve culturally significant concepts over time [6, 52]. The comparative method is employed to identify similarities and differences between Uzbek and English phraseological units.



This involves comparing units with similar meanings, metaphorical structures, or pragmatic functions. The analysis distinguishes between full equivalents, partial equivalents, and non-equivalents. Full equivalents share both semantic meaning and figurative imagery, while partial equivalents convey similar meanings but rely on different metaphors. Non-equivalents lack direct counterparts and require descriptive or culturally adapted translation. This comparative approach highlights how different cultures conceptualize similar experiences through distinct linguistic images [8, 104].

In addition, elements of cognitive linguistics are incorporated into the methodology to analyze metaphorical and conceptual structures underlying phraseological units. Conceptual metaphor theory is used to explain how abstract notions such as emotions, success, or failure are mapped onto concrete images. By identifying dominant metaphors in Uzbek and English phraseology, the study demonstrates how cognitive processes interact with cultural norms to shape semantic meaning. This method helps explain why certain metaphors are productive in one language but absent or marginal in another [4, 79]. To ensure objectivity and validity, contextual analysis is also applied. Phraseological units are examined within authentic contexts drawn from literary works, media texts, and spoken discourse. Contextual usage provides insight into pragmatic meaning, stylistic function, and emotional coloring. This step is particularly important for avoiding misinterpretation, as the meaning and function of a phraseological unit may vary depending on context. Furthermore, contextual analysis supports the identification of culturally appropriate usage and communicative value [7, 216].

Finally, the methodological framework includes elements of translation analysis. Selected phraseological units are analyzed in terms of their translatability and equivalence strategies. This aspect of the methodology is especially relevant for highlighting practical implications of the study. By examining translation techniques such as substitution, paraphrasing, and functional equivalence, the research demonstrates how cultural and semantic differences influence translation decisions. This approach reinforces the idea that phraseological competence is essential for effective intercultural communication and accurate translation [2, 76]. The chosen methodology provides a comprehensive and systematic approach to the study of phraseological units in Uzbek and English. By integrating semantic, cultural-linguistic, cognitive, and comparative methods, the research captures the multifaceted nature of phraseology and offers a nuanced analysis of how language reflects culture through fixed expressions.

Conclusion



The present study has examined the semantic and cultural-linguistic characteristics of phraseological units in Uzbek and English through a comparative and interdisciplinary approach. Phraseological units were analyzed not merely as fixed lexical combinations, but as linguo-cultural phenomena that reflect national mentality, cultural values, historical experience, and collective worldview. The findings of the research confirm that phraseological units constitute one of the most expressive and culturally marked layers of the lexical system in both languages. The semantic analysis demonstrated that phraseological units in Uzbek and English share a number of universal features. In both languages, idiomatic expressions are widely used to convey abstract notions such as emotions, character traits, social relationships, moral values, and everyday experiences. These shared semantic patterns indicate that human cognitive processes and fundamental life experiences often give rise to similar figurative meanings across languages. However, despite this universality, the study revealed that the metaphorical imagery and symbolic foundations of phraseological units are strongly influenced by culture-specific factors. From a cultural-linguistic perspective, the research highlighted significant differences between Uzbek and English phraseology. Uzbek phraseological units are deeply rooted in traditional values such as collectivism, respect for elders, patience, honor, and moral responsibility. Many expressions reflect agricultural life, family relations, and communal harmony, which are central elements of Uzbek cultural identity. In contrast, English phraseological units more frequently emphasize individualism, personal autonomy, pragmatism, and emotional restraint. These differences illustrate how cultural norms and social structures shape linguistic expression and semantic interpretation.

The comparative analysis further demonstrated that equivalence between Uzbek and English phraseological units is often partial or absent. While some idioms share similar meanings and metaphorical structures, many require functional or descriptive translation due to differences in cultural imagery. This finding underscores the complexity of phraseological translation and confirms that literal translation is rarely effective when dealing with idiomatic expressions. As a result, cultural awareness and contextual understanding are essential for achieving semantic and pragmatic equivalence. The integration of cognitive linguistic principles into the analysis provided additional insight into how metaphor and conceptual mapping operate within phraseological systems. The study showed that conceptual metaphors underlying phraseological units are shaped by both universal cognitive mechanisms and culturally specific experiences. Certain metaphors are productive and conventional in one language but marginal or nonexistent in the other, reflecting differences in perception, values, and lived reality.



The methodological framework employed in this research proved effective in capturing the multidimensional nature of phraseological units. By combining semantic analysis, cultural-linguistic interpretation, comparative methods, contextual analysis, and translation-oriented approaches, the study offered a comprehensive view of how phraseological meaning is constructed and interpreted. This interdisciplinary methodology can serve as a useful model for future research in phraseology and contrastive linguistics.

The results of the study have important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the research contributes to the fields of phraseology, cultural linguistics, and contrastive linguistics by demonstrating the inseparable connection between language and culture in the formation of idiomatic meaning. It reinforces the idea that phraseological units function as cultural codes that preserve and transmit collective knowledge across generations. From a practical standpoint, the findings are relevant for language teaching, translation studies, and intercultural communication. A deeper understanding of the semantic and cultural-linguistic features of phraseological units can help language learners develop phraseological competence and avoid misinterpretation. For translators, the study emphasizes the necessity of culturally informed translation strategies when working with idiomatic expressions. In intercultural communication, awareness of phraseological differences can prevent misunderstandings and enhance mutual understanding between speakers of different linguistic backgrounds.

In conclusion, the study confirms that phraseological units are not only linguistic constructions but also cultural artifacts that reflect the worldview and identity of a speech community. The comparative analysis of Uzbek and English phraseological units demonstrates how language embodies culture through metaphor, symbolism, and fixed expressions. Future research may expand this study by incorporating larger corpora, diachronic analysis, or additional languages, thereby further exploring the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and meaning.

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