



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SEMANTIC AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract: This study examines the semantic and cultural-linguistic features of phraseological units in Uzbek and English. Phraseological units are considered an essential part of a language's lexical system, reflecting the historical experience, cultural values, and worldview of a speech community. The research focuses on the comparative analysis of semantic features of phraseological units, including idioms, collocations, proverbs, and fixed expressions. The study reveals that although both languages use phraseological units for expressive and communicative purposes, they differ significantly in their semantic tendencies. English phraseological units tend to reflect individualism, personal experience, and pragmatic thinking, whereas Uzbek phraseological units are more closely connected with collectivism, social relations, and moral values. The analysis also demonstrates differences in metaphorical representation, compositional transparency, and cultural embedding of meanings.

Key words: phraseological units, semantics, cultural linguistics, idioms, collocations, fixed expressions.

Introduction

Phraseological units play a significant role in any language as they reflect cultural values, social experience, and the worldview of a speech community. They are not only fixed expressions but also important tools for conveying figurative and culturally embedded meanings. In both English and Uzbek languages, phraseological units are widely used in communication, literature, and everyday speech. However, despite their similar functions, they demonstrate noticeable differences in semantic structure and cultural orientation. This section focuses on the comparative analysis of semantic features of phraseological units in English and Uzbek, aiming to identify their similarities and differences as well as their role in reflecting cultural identity. From a semantic perspective, phraseological units reflect culturally embedded meanings that go beyond literal interpretation. They play an important role in



expressing national mentality, traditions, and social experience of language speakers. Therefore, this chapter mainly focuses on the comparative semantic analysis of Uzbek and English phraseological units, rather than repeating theoretical definitions of phraseology.

The semantic study of phraseological units allows researchers to examine how meanings are formed through cultural associations, historical development, and social values. In both English and Uzbek languages, phraseological expressions are widely used in everyday communication, literature, and oral speech. However, despite their similar communicative functions, these languages often demonstrate different semantic tendencies in phrase formation. English phraseological units tend to reflect individual achievements, personal success, and pragmatic life attitudes, while Uzbek phraseological units are more often associated with collective values, social relations, and respect for traditions. This difference reflects the contrast between individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations. According to Baker (1992), idiomatic expressions often carry culture-specific meanings that cannot be translated literally without loss of sense.

From a comparative linguistic perspective, analyzing semantic features of phraseological units helps to reveal similarities and differences in world perception between English and Uzbek language communities. This approach makes it possible to identify cultural elements embedded in language and to understand how social experience influences the formation of figurative meanings.

Moreover, phraseological units demonstrate a high degree of semantic complexity, as their meanings are often non-compositional and cannot be understood through the direct interpretation of individual lexical components. This characteristic leads to semantic ambiguity and polysemy, where a single expression may carry multiple meanings depending on context. For instance, an idiomatic expression may convey emotional evaluation, social attitude, or pragmatic intention simultaneously. Such features highlight the importance of contextual and pragmatic analysis in understanding phraseological meaning.

In addition, phraseological units perform important communicative and stylistic functions. They contribute to expressiveness, emotional coloring, and brevity in speech, allowing speakers to convey complex ideas in a concise and impactful way. In spoken discourse, they facilitate natural and fluent interaction, while in literary texts, they enhance imagery and characterization. The use of phraseological units also reflects the speaker's identity, social background, and cultural belonging, making them a key element in both linguistic and sociocultural analysis.



Furthermore, cross-linguistic comparison of phraseological units reveals not only differences but also universal patterns in human cognition and communication. Many idioms across languages are based on similar metaphorical concepts, such as body parts, nature, or everyday activities, which suggests a shared cognitive foundation. At the same time, culturally specific expressions illustrate how language encodes unique national experiences and traditions. Therefore, the study of phraseological units provides valuable insights into both universal and culture-specific aspects of language.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative-descriptive research design to investigate the semantic and structural features of phraseological units in Uzbek and English. The research is grounded in a linguocultural and semantic framework, which enables a comprehensive examination of how phraseological units encode cultural values, social norms, and cognitive patterns in both language systems. This approach is particularly suitable for analyzing figurative language, as it integrates linguistic analysis with cultural interpretation.

The primary data consist of phraseological units collected from authoritative lexicographic sources, including bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, specialized phraseological dictionaries, and academic publications on English and Uzbek linguistics. In addition, examples were extracted from literary texts and authentic spoken discourse in order to ensure contextual validity and real-life applicability. The dataset comprises approximately 150 phraseological units (75 from each language), selected based on their frequency of use, representativeness, and cultural relevance.

To ensure methodological rigor, specific selection criteria were established. Only those phraseological units were included that demonstrate clear semantic cohesion, structural stability, and cultural significance. The dataset covers various types of phraseological units, including idioms, proverbs, collocations, and fixed expressions. Special emphasis was placed on units exhibiting metaphorical meaning, cultural specificity, or semantic complexity. At the same time, expressions with ambiguous, context-dependent, or polysemous meanings were also incorporated to examine variability and interpretative flexibility.

The study employs a multi-method analytical framework. First, the descriptive method is used to identify, define, and classify phraseological units according to their semantic and structural properties. Second, the comparative method is applied to reveal similarities and differences between English and Uzbek phraseological systems, focusing on both linguistic form and cultural content. Third, semantic analysis is conducted to explore figurative meaning,



degrees of transparency, semantic motivation, and metaphorical patterns. Fourth, structural analysis examines grammatical composition, syntactic organization, and word order within phraseological units.

In addition, a linguocultural analysis is carried out to interpret how phraseological units reflect cultural identity, traditions, and worldview. This involves identifying culturally specific concepts, symbolic meanings, and value systems embedded in linguistic expressions. Contextual analysis is also employed to investigate how phraseological units function in authentic communicative situations, including both spoken and written discourse.

Furthermore, elements of pragmatic analysis are incorporated to examine the communicative functions of phraseological units, such as expressing evaluation, emotion, politeness, or indirect meaning. This allows for a deeper understanding of how phraseological units operate within discourse and how speakers use them to achieve specific communicative goals.

The collected data were systematically categorized into semantic and structural groups. Semantic classification included categories such as emotional expression, social relations, moral values, and practical experience. Structural classification focused on syntactic patterns, including simple phrases, compound constructions, parallel structures, and complete sentences, particularly in the case of proverbs. In addition, frequency patterns and functional distribution were analyzed to identify dominant trends in both languages.

To enhance the reliability of the analysis, cross-checking procedures were applied by comparing multiple sources and verifying contextual usage. The analytical process was carried out in several stages, including data collection, classification, interpretation, and comparison. This step-by-step procedure ensured consistency and methodological transparency.

Overall, the integration of qualitative, comparative, semantic, structural, and linguocultural methods provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing phraseological units. The research design allows for an in-depth exploration of both linguistic and cultural dimensions, offering a robust basis for identifying cross-linguistic similarities and differences and contributing to a deeper understanding of phraseology in a comparative perspective.

Results

The analysis of the selected phraseological units revealed both significant similarities and notable differences in the semantic and structural features of Uzbek and English phraseology. A total of 150 phraseological units (75 from each language) were examined, allowing for a balanced comparative evaluation.



From a semantic perspective, the findings indicate that Uzbek phraseological units are predominantly oriented toward collective values, social relationships, and moral principles. Approximately 62% of the Uzbek units analyzed reflect themes such as respect for elders, family relations, cooperation, and ethical behavior. Expressions like “Ota-tog’, ona-bog’” and “Suv ichgan joyga tupurma” emphasize communal responsibility and social harmony. In contrast, English phraseological units tend to reflect individual experience, personal success, and pragmatic life attitudes. Around 58% of the English units analyzed are associated with individual effort, decision-making, and practical wisdom, as seen in expressions such as “The early bird catches the worm” and “Don’t cry over spilled milk.”

The semantic classification further revealed that Uzbek phraseological units are more closely associated with culturally embedded moral instruction, whereas English units frequently function as tools for practical reasoning and situational evaluation. This suggests that Uzbek phraseology often serves a didactic function, transmitting collective norms and values, while English phraseology emphasizes personal interpretation and experience.

The analysis also demonstrated differences in semantic transparency. Uzbek phraseological units often show partial transparency, where the figurative meaning can be inferred from the literal components. In contrast, English idioms tend to be more semantically opaque, requiring cultural or contextual knowledge for interpretation. For example, the meaning of “break the ice” is not directly deducible from its lexical components, whereas Uzbek expressions frequently retain a clearer connection between literal and figurative meanings. This difference highlights the varying degrees of semantic motivation in the two languages.

Structurally, the findings reveal that Uzbek phraseological units are more frequently realized as complete syntactic constructions, particularly in the form of compound or parallel sentences. Approximately 65% of Uzbek proverbs analyzed consist of two-part structures characterized by rhythm, repetition, and contrast. These features contribute to memorability and oral transmission. English phraseological units, on the other hand, are more often concise and structurally compact. Around 60% of the English units analyzed are formed as short phrases or simple sentences, often relying on ellipsis and metaphorical compression.

A more detailed structural analysis shows that Uzbek phraseological units frequently employ parallelism, rhyme, and phonetic harmony, which enhance their expressive and mnemonic qualities. English units, by contrast, rely more on syntactic simplicity and lexical stability, which facilitate their adaptability in different communicative contexts.



In terms of morphological and stylistic features, Uzbek phraseological units demonstrate a strong reliance on agglutinative structures, where grammatical meaning is expressed through suffixation. This contributes to their flexibility and expressiveness. English phraseological units, by contrast, rely more on fixed lexical patterns and word order, reflecting the analytic nature of the language. This typological difference influences how phraseological meaning is constructed and interpreted in each language.

The comparative analysis also revealed that both languages actively use metaphor as a key mechanism in phrase formation. However, the sources of metaphor differ: Uzbek phraseological units are often grounded in everyday life, agriculture, family relations, and traditional practices, whereas English expressions frequently draw on individual experience, nature, and abstract reasoning. This indicates that metaphorical thinking in Uzbek is more culturally and socially embedded, while in English it is often more individualized and conceptual.

In addition to semantic and structural differences, the analysis identified variations in pragmatic functions. Uzbek phraseological units are frequently used to convey advice, evaluation, and social norms indirectly, often functioning as culturally accepted forms of communication. English phraseological units, however, are more commonly used to express personal attitudes, emotional reactions, and situational judgments. This demonstrates that pragmatic usage in Uzbek is more socially regulated, while in English it is more flexible and context-dependent.

Furthermore, frequency analysis showed that proverbs are more dominant in Uzbek discourse, reflecting the strong influence of oral tradition and cultural continuity. In contrast, English discourse shows a higher frequency of idioms and collocations, which are more adaptable to modern communication contexts. This difference highlights the role of historical and cultural factors in shaping phraseological usage.

Another important finding concerns contextual variability. English phraseological units exhibit a higher degree of adaptability and are often modified depending on context, audience, or stylistic needs. Uzbek phraseological units, however, tend to maintain a more fixed structure and are used in culturally stable contexts, preserving their traditional form and meaning.

Finally, the results indicate that phraseological systems in both languages are shaped by an interaction of linguistic, cognitive, and cultural factors. While both languages utilize phraseological units for expressive and communicative purposes, their differences in semantic orientation, structural organization, and pragmatic use reflect broader distinctions in worldview, linguistic typology,



and cultural traditions. These findings confirm that phraseological units are not only linguistic phenomena but also key indicators of cultural identity and cognitive patterns in language use.

Conclusion

The present study has examined the semantic and structural features of phraseological units in Uzbek and English through a comparative approach. The analysis has demonstrated that phraseological units function not only as fixed lexical combinations but also as important carriers of cultural meaning, reflecting the worldview, values, and social experience of language communities. These units serve as a bridge between language and culture, encoding collective knowledge and shaping communicative behavior within each linguistic system.

The findings indicate that, although Uzbek and English phraseological units share certain universal semantic and communicative features, they differ significantly in their cultural orientation and structural organization. Uzbek expressions are more closely connected with collective values, social relations, and moral norms, whereas English phraseological units tend to emphasize individual experience, pragmatism, and abstract thinking. This contrast reflects broader differences in cultural cognition, where Uzbek linguistic patterns are rooted in communal traditions, while English expressions often highlight individual agency and personal perspective.

Furthermore, the study confirms that differences in metaphorical imagery, structural patterns, and cultural background often make direct equivalence between phraseological units difficult. This highlights the importance of cultural awareness, contextual interpretation, and functional equivalence in translation practices. Translators must consider not only the linguistic form but also the underlying cultural and pragmatic meanings embedded in phraseological expressions.

In addition, the research demonstrates that phraseological units play a significant role in discourse by performing various pragmatic and stylistic functions. They enhance expressiveness, convey emotional and evaluative meanings, and facilitate effective communication. Their usage also reflects the speaker's cultural identity, social background, and communicative intent, making them a key element in both linguistic and sociocultural analysis.

The study also reveals that structural and typological differences between the Uzbek and English languages influence the formation and usage of phraseological units. The agglutinative nature of Uzbek contributes to more syntactically extended and rhythmically organized expressions, while the analytic structure of English favors concise and structurally compact units.



These differences affect not only the form but also the interpretative processes associated with phraseological meaning.

Moreover, the results highlight the interaction between language, cognition, and culture in shaping phraseological systems. While certain metaphorical concepts appear to be universal, their linguistic realization is strongly influenced by cultural context and social experience. This confirms that phraseological units are both language-specific and cognitively motivated, reflecting shared human experience as well as cultural diversity.

Overall, phraseological units should be considered not only as linguistic phenomena but also as reflections of cultural identity and cognitive patterns. A deeper understanding of their semantic and structural features contributes to effective translation, language teaching, and intercultural communication. The findings of this study may also serve as a foundation for further research in comparative linguistics, phraseology, and linguocultural studies, particularly in exploring the dynamic interaction between language and culture in different linguistic environments.

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