

**STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ENGLISH
AND UZBEK IDIOMS: A COMPARATIVE PHRASEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20593762>

Nurmatova Muniskhon, PhD

FerSU, Foreign Languages Department

Abdulazizova Marhabo, student

FerSU, Foreign Languages Department

Abstract: *This article examines structural and cultural differences between English and Uzbek idioms through a comparative phraseological framework. Drawing on selected examples from both languages, the study investigates how the typological contrast between English as an analytic language and Uzbek as an agglutinative language gives rise to fundamentally different mechanisms of idiomatic formation, fixedness, and grammatical integration. The analysis further explores how cultural values — including honour, family, and hospitality in Uzbek, and individual agency, sport, and trade in English — shape the figurative imagery embedded in each language’s phraseological stock. The findings indicate that while English and Uzbek idioms may convey semantically parallel meanings, their structural organization and cultural underpinnings diverge significantly, with important implications for contrastive linguistics, translation studies, and cross-cultural communication.*

Keywords: *contrastive linguistics, English idioms, Uzbek idioms, phraseology, cultural semantics, agglutinative languages, idiomatic fixedness, translation*

INTRODUCTION

Idioms constitute one of the most culturally embedded and linguistically complex components of any natural language. Unlike literal expressions, idioms cannot be interpreted through the meanings of their individual components; their interpretation depends on shared cultural knowledge and contextual familiarity. This characteristic makes them both a productive object of linguistic inquiry and a persistent challenge for language learners and translators. In contemporary linguistics, idioms are recognised not merely as stylistic embellishments but as meaningful units reflecting how speakers conceptualise reality. Cognitive linguistics has demonstrated that idioms are closely linked to conceptual metaphors grounded in embodied experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Abstract notions such as emotion, understanding, and social behaviour are frequently expressed through physical movement, spatial orientation, or sensory perception. The comparison of English and Uzbek idioms offers an especially productive area of study. English is an analytic language in which grammatical relations are expressed primarily through word order, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions. Uzbek, by contrast, is an agglutinative Turkic language in which grammatical meanings are conveyed through a rich system of suffixes. This typological difference has direct consequences for idiomatic structure, fixedness, and

grammatical behaviour. Beyond grammar, the two languages also diverge in the cultural imagery their idioms encode, reflecting the distinct social practices, values, and historical experiences of their speech communities. The present study aims to analyse idiomatic expressions in English and Uzbek with a focus on their structural and cultural dimensions. It also seeks to identify key differences between the two languages and to examine the implications for translation and cross-cultural communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on idiomatic expressions has evolved considerably over recent decades. Early frameworks, such as that of Vinogradov (1977), classified phraseological units according to structural properties and degrees of semantic fusion. While foundational, these approaches did not fully account for the cognitive mechanisms underlying idiomatic meaning. The development of cognitive linguistics introduced a transformative perspective. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that metaphor is central to human thought, not peripheral to it. Their work demonstrated that idioms are frequently manifestations of broader conceptual metaphors. Kövecses (2010) extended this framework, showing that metaphorical patterns are both systematic and culturally variable. Cultural linguistics has further enriched the study of idioms. Wierzbicka (1997) emphasised that idiomatic expressions encode cultural values and shared social experiences, explaining why many expressions resist direct cross-linguistic equivalence. In translation studies, Baker (2018) identified idioms as among the most challenging areas, proposing strategies of equivalence, paraphrase, and adaptation. Within Uzbek linguistics, Rahmatullaev (1992) offered a comprehensive analysis of phraseological units, emphasising their deep connection to everyday life and cultural tradition. Contrastive phraseology, as developed by Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2005), provides the methodological foundation for cross-linguistic comparison, showing that structurally parallel expressions may differ substantially in cultural framing.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on descriptive and comparative analysis. Idiomatic expressions from English and Uzbek were selected from bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, phraseological studies, and authentic usage contexts. The selection focused on commonly used idioms across several semantic domains, including emotion, cognition, social interaction, and moral evaluation. The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, idioms are examined at the structural level to identify how grammatical properties of each language shape idiomatic form and fixedness. Second, their cultural imagery and source domains are compared to reveal divergences in the values and social experience they encode. Third, implications for translation and cross-cultural communication are considered. The comparative approach allows for systematic identification of both structural divergences and cultural differences, providing a comprehensive account of how idioms function differently across the two languages.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis reveals several important structural and cultural differences between English and Uzbek idioms. Word order and fixedness. English idioms depend on a fixed

arrangement of their components. To spill the beans is recognisable as an idiom precisely because verb and noun phrase appear in a specific, conventionalised sequence; rearrangement destroys the idiomatic meaning. Uzbek idioms follow the SOV syntax of the language and accommodate morphological variation through suffixes. The expression *og‘zidan gullab qo‘ymoq* ('to let something slip') can receive tense and person suffixes while the core figurative image remains intact. Idiomatic stability in Uzbek therefore resides in the lexical image rather than syntactic rigidity. Prepositions, articles, and possessives. English idioms frequently incorporate prepositions and articles as structurally essential elements. In hot water, out of the blue, a hard nut to crack, and the last straw each depend on specific prepositions or articles that cannot be altered without destroying the expression. Uzbek encodes equivalent relations through case suffixes and postpositions, and possesses no article system. Structural transfer of such idioms is therefore impossible even when semantic equivalence can be approximated. Possessive elements also differ: English uses free-standing pronouns (to change one's mind), while Uzbek attaches possessive suffixes directly to the noun stem. Honour, face, and social reputation. A defining feature of Uzbek phraseology is the prominence of idioms encoding social honour and public reputation. The word *yuz* ('face') anchors a productive semantic field: *yuzini yerga qaratmoq* ('to cast someone's face downward') encodes shame, while *yuzi yorug' bo'lmoq* ('for one's face to be bright') encodes respect. The expression *dasturxoni ochiq* ('one whose table is open') preserves the cultural centrality of hospitality. English possesses face-related idioms—notably to save face—but the face metaphor does not function with the same phraseological productivity in English as in Uzbek. Individual versus collective framing. Uzbek idioms frequently situate individual behaviour within a framework of family honour and social responsibility. *Ota-onasining yuzini yorug' qilmoq* ('to make one's parents' face bright') connects personal conduct to familial reputation. English idioms more frequently foreground individual agency: to take the bull by the horns and to stand on one's own feet emphasise personal decision-making and self-reliance. These contrasts reflect systematic differences in cultural framing rather than absolute distinctions. Source domains and stylistic tone. English idioms draw extensively on maritime activity (to be in the same boat), sport (to play by the rules), theatre (to steal the show), trade, and legal procedure—domains historically significant in English-speaking societies. Uzbek idioms more frequently draw on the domestic sphere, agricultural life, and communal interaction. Stylistically, English colloquial idioms tend towards humour and irony (not my cup of tea), while Uzbek idioms more often carry a morally serious or emotionally weighty tone consistent with a speech tradition in which figurative language holds social authority.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that idioms operate at the intersection of grammar, cognition, and culture. The structural differences identified in this study are not arbitrary but are motivated by the underlying typological properties of each language. English fixedness is enforced through syntactic immobility and the presence of grammatically specific elements such as prepositions and articles. Uzbek fixedness operates differently: the core image is preserved while morphological form adapts to the sentence context. At the cultural level, the

divergences documented here reflect broader differences in social values and historical experience. Uzbek idioms prioritise community, honour, and family, while English idioms more frequently celebrate individual action, competition, and public performance. These patterns are not absolute but represent systematic tendencies in how each language encodes human behaviour. For translation practice, the implications are significant. Formal equivalence between English and Uzbek idioms is rarely achievable. Translators must seek functional and tonal equivalence, choosing Uzbek expressions that perform a comparable communicative role even when the imagery differs. In cases of cultural non-equivalence, domestication or explanatory adaptation is required to preserve both meaning and pragmatic effect. These findings also have implications for language pedagogy. Learners of English as a foreign language in Uzbekistan, and Uzbek learners of English, benefit from explicit instruction that addresses not only idiomatic meaning but also the structural logic and cultural context underlying each expression.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined structural and cultural differences between English and Uzbek idioms from a comparative phraseological perspective. At the structural level, English idioms depend on fixed word order, prepositions, articles, and stable syntactic patterns, reflecting the analytic character of the language. Uzbek idioms maintain phraseological stability through the preservation of the core figurative image while accommodating morphological variation through suffixes, reflecting the agglutinative character of Uzbek. At the cultural level, Uzbek idioms encode values centred on social honour, family responsibility, and communal reputation, drawing figurative imagery from the domestic and agricultural domains. English idioms reflect the historical experience of English-speaking societies, drawing on maritime, sporting, commercial, and theatrical domains, and tending towards individual agency and ironic tone. The analysis confirms that idioms cannot be adequately understood through semantic meaning alone. Their structural organisation, cultural imagery, moral associations, and stylistic tone are all integral dimensions of their identity as phraseological units. A full comparative account must engage with all of these levels simultaneously. Future research may extend this analysis to specific idiomatic subdomains, such as emotional or somatic idioms, and may employ corpus-based methods to investigate frequency and register variation. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language simultaneously reflects shared human cognition and distinct cultural identity.

REFERENCES:

1. Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A coursebook on translation* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
2. Dobrovolskij, D., & Piirainen, E. (2005). *Figurative language: Cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspectives*. Elsevier.
3. Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford University Press.
4. Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.

5. Rahmatullaev, S. (1992). O‘zbek tilining frazeologik lug‘ati. Toshkent.
6. Vinogradov, V. V. (1977). Ob osnovnykh tipakh frazeologicheskikh edinits v russkom yazyke. Nauka.
7. Wierzbicka, A. (1997). Understanding cultures through their key words. Oxford University Press.