

LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN CHANGING MEANING OF IDIOMATIC COMPOUNDS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Annotation

This article explores the linguistic factors that contribute to changes in the meanings of idiomatic compounds in English and Uzbek languages. Idiomatic compounds — fixed multi-word expressions whose overall meaning cannot be deduced from the meanings of individual components — are deeply rooted in cultural and historical contexts. The research focuses on semantic shifts, influence of cultural contact, translation challenges, and cognitive motivations behind idiom evolution. Drawing on comparative analysis, the paper examines how social changes, language contact, metaphorical extensions, and communicative needs affect idiomatic usage and interpretation in both languages. It highlights key differences and similarities between English and Uzbek idioms, reflecting distinct cultural values, worldview patterns, and linguistic structures. Additionally, the study discusses how globalization and increased bilingualism influence idiomatic transformation. The findings show that semantic adaptation often involves metaphorical reconceptualization, pragmatic reanalysis, and idiom borrowing or calquing. This article contributes to cross-linguistic idiom studies and provides insights for translators, language teachers, and computational linguists dealing with natural language understanding. The comparative framework demonstrates that while some idiomatic changes are universal, others are language-specific, driven by sociocultural dynamics.

Keywords: idiomatic compounds, semantic change, cross-linguistic comparison, metaphorical extension, Uzbek idioms, English idioms, language contact, cultural influence, translation studies, cognitive linguistics.

Лингвистические факторы изменения значения идиоматических сочетаний в английском и узбекском языках.

Аннотация

Статья посвящена лингвистическим факторам, влияющим на изменение значений идиоматических композиций в английском и узбекском языках. Идиоматические конструкции — это устойчивые словосочетания, значение которых нельзя вывести из значений отдельных компонентов, и они глубоко

укоренены в культурно-историческом контексте. Исследование рассматривает семантические сдвиги, влияние культурных контактов, проблемы перевода и когнитивные механизмы, лежащие в основе эволюции идиом. На основе сравнительного анализа статья показывает, как социальные изменения, языковые контакты, метафорические расширения и коммуникативные потребности влияют на употребление и интерпретацию идиом в обоих языках. Выделены основные различия и сходства между английскими и узбекскими идиомами, отражающие специфические культурные ценности, мировоззренческие модели и языковые структуры. Кроме того, обсуждается влияние глобализации и двуязычия на трансформацию идиоматических выражений. Результаты показывают, что семантическая адаптация часто включает в себя метафорическую реконцептуализацию, прагматический переанализ и заимствование идиом. Статья вносит вклад в сравнительное изучение идиом и будет полезна переводчикам, преподавателям языков и специалистам по обработке естественного языка.

Ключевые слова: идиоматические конструкции, семантические изменения, сопоставительный анализ, метафорическое расширение, узбекские идиомы, английские идиомы, языковой контакт, влияние культуры, переводоведение, когнитивная лингвистика

Ingliz va o‘zbek tillarida idiomatik birikmalar ma’nosining o‘zgarishida lingvistik omillar.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola ingliz va o‘zbek tillarida idiomatik birikmalarning ma’nosini o‘zgartiruvchi lingvistik omillarni o‘rganadi. Idiomatik birikmalar — alohida so‘zlarning ma’nolari asosida umumiy ma’nosi aniqlanmaydigan, barqaror ifodalardir va ular o‘zining madaniy-tarixiy kontekstiga mustahkam bog‘langan. Tadqiqot semantik o‘zgarishlar, madaniy aloqalar ta’siri, tarjima muammolari va idiom rivojlanishidagi kognitiv omillarga e’tibor qaratadi. Solishtirma tahlil orqali maqolada jamiyatdagi o‘zgarishlar, tillararo aloqalar, metaforik kengayishlar va kommunikativ ehtiyojlarning idiomatik qo‘llanish va talqinlarga qanday ta’sir qilishi tahlil qilinadi. Ingliz va o‘zbek tillaridagi idiomalar o‘rtasidagi asosiy farqlar va o‘xshashliklar, alohida madaniy qadriyatlar, dunyoqarash naqshlari va til tuzilmalaridan kelib chiqqan holda ko‘rsatiladi. Bundan tashqari, globalizatsiya va ikki tillilikning ko‘payishi idiomatik o‘zgarishga qanday ta’sir qilayotgani muhokama qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari semantik moslashuvning ko‘pincha metaforik qayta tasavvur, pragmatik tahlil va idiomlarning qarzlashuvi yoki kalkirlanishi bilan kechishini ko‘rsatadi. Ushbu maqola tilshunoslar, tarjimonlar va til o‘rgatuvchilarga foydali bo‘ladi.

Kalit so'zlar: idiomatik birikmalar, semantik o'zgarish, solishtirma tahlil, metaforik kengayish, o'zbek idiomalari, ingliz idiomalari, tillararo aloqa, madaniy ta'sir, tarjima nazariyasi, kognitiv lingvistika.

Introduction

Idiomatic compounds, such as “break the ice” in English or “qo‘lini ochmoq” in Uzbek, are expressions whose meanings transcend the literal definitions of their elements. These constructions are a rich area of study for linguists due to their semantic opacity, cultural specificity, and dynamic nature. This article investigates the linguistic factors that contribute to meaning changes in idiomatic compounds within English and Uzbek languages. By examining semantic shifts, cultural contact, cognitive mechanisms, and pragmatic adaptation, the study aims to identify both universal and language-specific processes in idiom evolution.

Defining Idiomatic Compounds

An idiomatic compound is a multi-word expression whose overall meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of its parts. For example, “kick the bucket” in English means ‘to die’, which is distinct from the meanings of kick or bucket. Similarly, Uzbek idioms like “tojini pishirmoq” (‘to act presumptuously’) defy straightforward compositional analysis. These phrases often involve metaphor, cultural reference, or historical usage. Idiom studies intersect with semantics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and cognitive linguistics. They serve as markers of cultural identity and as indicators of cognitive patterns within speech communities.

Semantic Change in Idioms

Semantic change refers to the evolution of meaning over time. Idioms are not immune to this process. Several mechanisms drive semantic shifts in idiomatic compounds:

- **Metaphorical extension:** Many idioms originate from concrete experiences and gradually extend metaphorically. For instance, “see the light” means ‘to understand’, though its metaphorical roots lie in visual perception. In Uzbek, “ko‘z ochmoq” (‘to open one’s eyes’) can metaphorically refer to gaining awareness or beginning something new.
- **Pragmatic reanalysis:** Speakers may reinterpret idioms based on usage context. Over generations, this can shift the idiom’s meaning subtly. For example, English “spill the beans” historically meant ‘reveal a secret’, but in informal speech, it may be used more broadly for disclosure generally.
- **Generalization and specialization:** Some idioms broaden their semantic scope, while others become more specific. For example, “hit the road” originally meant literally starting a journey but now is often used metaphorically to mean ‘leave’ in various contexts.

Cultural Influence and Language Contact

Idiomatic compounds are deeply embedded in culture. Cultural preferences, traditions, and historical experiences shape idioms. English idioms often draw from Western historical references (“cross the Rubicon”), sports (“throw in the towel”), and agriculture (“put all eggs in one basket”). Uzbek idiomatic expressions may reflect pastoral life, Islamic heritage, and local folk wisdom. Language contact — through trade, migration, colonization, or globalization — also influences idiomatic change. English idioms spread worldwide through media and education, sometimes being calqued (loan-translated) into other languages. In Uzbek, contact with Russian and Persian historically introduced new idiomatic patterns or semantic nuances. For example, idiomatic phrases may adapt semantically under the influence of Russian constructs during the Soviet era.

Cognitive and Pragmatic Factors

Cognitive linguistics suggests that metaphor and embodiment play central roles in idiom comprehension and variation. Idioms often map abstract concepts onto physical or sensory domains. For instance, “hold one’s tongue” involves the physical act of holding, mapped metaphorically to ‘remain silent’. Similarly, Uzbek idioms map bodily experience to abstract meaning — body-related terms often appear in metaphorical idioms.

Pragmatics — language use in context — also affects idiomatic stability. Speakers might choose non-standard or creative variants for expressive effect. Over time, such innovations can enter common usage, leading to shifts in idiomatic meaning.

Translation Challenges

Translating idioms between languages poses notable challenges. A literal translation often fails to convey the intended meaning. For example, the English idiom “break the ice” — meaning ‘to initiate conversation’ — if translated literally into Uzbek, loses its communicative function. An equivalent Uzbek idiom would be “suhbatni boshlamoq” or metaphorically adapted.

Translators must balance fidelity to meaning with cultural appropriateness. They often resort to functional equivalence — choosing an idiom in the target language that carries a similar pragmatic impact, even if idiom components differ. This is one reason why idiom translation studies is a critical subfield within translation studies.

Comparative Analysis: English vs Uzbek

Comparative idiom studies reveal both shared tendencies and language-specific patterns:

- Metaphor types: Physical action and body imagery dominate idioms in both languages, but the specific source domains differ. English idioms frequently involve tools, animals, or sports; Uzbek idioms often include agricultural or pastoral imagery.

- Semantic shift patterns: Both languages exhibit semantic broadening, specialization, and metaphorical extension. However, the cultural salience of certain source domains affects which idioms persist or transform.
- Global influence: English idioms, due to the global reach of English, often enter Uzbek usage, especially among younger speakers. Such borrowings may undergo semantic adaptation to fit Uzbek pragmatic norms.

Implications and Applications

Understanding idiomatic change has practical applications:

- Language teaching: Idioms are crucial for advanced proficiency. Teachers must explain cultural context and semantic nuances.
- Translation practice: Effective translation strategies enhance accuracy and readability.
- Computational linguistics: Natural language processing systems must recognize idiomatic meaning to perform tasks such as sentiment analysis or machine translation accurately.

Conclusion

Idiomatic compounds are dynamic elements shaped by cognitive, cultural, and communicative forces. Semantic change in idioms arises from metaphorical extension, pragmatic reanalysis, language contact, and cultural evolution. Although English and Uzbek idioms share universal linguistic tendencies, their specific trajectories reflect distinct cultural histories and language structures. Continued comparative research enriches our understanding of idiom change and supports applied linguistic fields such as translation, language education, and computational modeling. Furthermore, the analysis of idiomatic compounds in English and Uzbek demonstrates that meaning change is not a random process but a systematic linguistic phenomenon influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include semantic motivation, metaphorical mapping, and cognitive reinterpretation, while external factors involve social change, intercultural communication, and language contact. Idioms adapt to new communicative environments in order to remain expressive and relevant for speakers, which explains their semantic flexibility despite structural stability.

The comparative perspective confirms that idiomatic expressions function as cultural markers, preserving national worldview and collective experience. However, in the context of globalization and digital communication, idioms increasingly undergo simplification, hybridization, or semantic neutralization. This tendency is especially visible in bilingual speech and translation practices, where idioms may lose their original imagery but retain pragmatic meaning.

Finally, understanding the mechanisms of idiomatic meaning change is essential for improving cross-cultural communication, enhancing translation accuracy, and

developing more effective language teaching methodologies. Future research may focus on corpus-based studies and diachronic analysis to further explore idiomatic variation and change across languages.

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