

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR AND CULTURAL MODELS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PHRASEOLOGY: A COGNITIVE-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Khamidova Sugdiyona *Master's Student*

Uzbekistan State University of World Languages

Scientific advisor: Akhmedov Oybek Saporbayevich

Doctor of Science in philology (DSc),

Professor of UzSWLU.

Abstract. Phraseological units (PUs)—idioms, proverbs, collocations, and set expressions—constitute a vital layer of the lexicon, encapsulating collective cognitive and cultural experience. This article examines phraseological systems in English and Uzbek through the lens of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and cultural models (Kövecses, 2005). While earlier studies tended to treat idioms as arbitrary, the cognitive paradigm highlights their conceptual motivation and embodiment. Based on a comparative corpus of English and Uzbek idioms, they are categorized into embodied, environmental, and socio-cultural domains. Analysis reveals both universal metaphors and culture-specific models.

Keywords: phraseology, conceptual metaphor, cognitive linguistics, English, Uzbek, cultural models, idioms

Annotatsiya. Frazologik birliklar (FB) — idiomalar, maqollar, kollokatsiyalar va barqaror soʻz birikmalari — tilning muhim qatlamini tashkil etib, xalqning kognitiv hamda madaniy tajribasini mujassamlashtiradi. Ushbu maqolada ingliz va oʻzbek tillaridagi frazeologik tizimlar Lakoff va Johnson (1980) tomonidan ilgari surilgan kontseptual metafora nazariyasi hamda Kövecses (2005) tomonidan asoslangan madaniy modellar nuqtai nazaridan tahlil qilinadi. Avvalgi tadqiqotlarda idiomalar koʻpincha tasodifiy til birliklari sifatida koʻrilgan boʻlsa, kognitiv yondashuv ularning maʼnoviy motivatsiyasi va inson tajribasiga asoslanganligini koʻrsatadi. Tadqiqot ingliz va oʻzbek idiomalarining solishtirma korpusiga tayangan holda ularni tanaviy (embodied), atrof-muhit (environmental) va ijtimoiy-madaniy (socio-cultural) sohalarga ajratadi. Natijalar shuni koʻrsatadiki, frazeologik tizimlarda ham umuminsoniy metaforalar, ham madaniyatga xos modellar mavjud boʻlib, ular inson tafakkuri va madaniy qadriyatlar oʻrtasidagi oʻzaro aloqani yoritadi.

Kalit soʻzlar: frazeologiya, kontseptual metafora, kognitiv lingvistika, ingliz tili, oʻzbek tili, madaniy modellar, idiomalar.

Introduction. Language does not merely describe reality but structures human cognition. Phraseological units (PUs), including idioms and proverbs, are a rich

repository of collective imagery and cultural memory. Scholars such as Vinogradov (1946), Kunin (1996), and in Uzbekistan Begmatov (2010) have emphasized the linguistic and stylistic role of idioms. Yet the **cognitive turn** in linguistics—spearheaded by Lakoff, Johnson, and Kövecses—has reframed idioms as conceptual windows into thought.

In both English and Uzbek, idioms are crucial for everyday communication. For learners, they often pose difficulty because meaning cannot be deduced literally. For linguists, however, idioms offer a unique vantage point for investigating how cognition, metaphor, and culture intersect.

There are classical and structural approaches onto metaphors. According to Russian and European traditions which were expressed by scholars like Vinogradov (1946) who classified idioms into fusions, unities, and collocations and Kunin (1996) who systematized English idioms lexicographically. In Uzbek linguistics, phraseology as a field developed in the mid-20th century, with researchers such as G‘ulomov, Begmatov, and later Mamajonov emphasizing classification and semantics.

Lakoff & Johnson(1980) made cognitive turn in idiom studies pioneering conceptual metaphor theory and showing idioms are motivated by mental mappings (e.g., happy is up → “feeling high”). Gibbs in 1994 demonstrated idiom comprehension as grounded in embodied experience. Later Kövecses integrated culture into metaphor studies, showing variation across communities. In 2005 Dobrovol’skiy & Piirainen studied idiom universals and cultural markedness. In 2004 Charteris-Black developed critical metaphor analysis, linking metaphor to ideology. Uzbek scholars such as Begmatov in 2010 and Rajabov in 2020 focused on semantic typology and cultural significance of idioms, often within agricultural and pastoral frames.

While structural and semantic typologies are abundant, few works systematically apply cognitive linguistics to compare English and Uzbek idioms. This study addresses this gap by focusing on conceptual metaphors and cultural models, thus contributing both to comparative phraseology and cognitive linguistics.

Methodology. The data for this study were drawn from both English and Uzbek sources in order to ensure a balanced and representative corpus. For English, the main references included the Oxford dictionary of idioms (2004), the Cambridge idioms dictionary (2015), and the American heritage dictionary of idioms (2015). For Uzbek, the material was based on “O‘zbek tilining frazeologik lug‘ati” (2016), as well as works by Begmatov (2010) and Rajabov (2020), which provide authoritative collections and analyses of Uzbek phraseological units. Care was taken to balance English and Uzbek examples across key semantic and cultural domains, namely embodiment, nature, and socio-cultural practices, so that the comparison would capture both universal and culture-specific tendencies.

The analysis proceeded within the framework of Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), which makes it possible to identify systematic source–target mappings underlying idiomatic expressions. In addition, the study employed the notion of cultural models in order to explore how idioms reflect ecological conditions, religious values, and historical experience in each linguistic community. Finally, a contrastive method was used to categorize idioms into those showing functional equivalence, partial overlap, or culture-specific conceptualization, thereby enabling a nuanced comparative understanding of English and Uzbek phraseology.

Results. The results of the study confirm that phraseological systems in both English and Uzbek languages are deeply grounded in human cognition and cultural experience. By examining idioms within four major semantic domains—embodiment, environment, color, and food—it becomes evident that while both languages share a number of universal conceptual metaphors, they also reveal distinctive cultural models shaped by geography, history, and worldview.

Idioms related to the human body and basic emotions demonstrate a high degree of universality. Both English and Uzbek phraseologies employ similar conceptual mappings between physical and emotional experience, showing that human embodiment forms a common cognitive basis for metaphorical thought. For instance, English idioms such as *blow one's top* and *burn with rage* conceptualize anger as heat or fire, whereas their Uzbek counterparts—*qon bosimi chiqmoq* and *otashdek yonmoq*—draw upon the same physical schema of internal heat and combustion. This correspondence indicates that the conceptual metaphor “Anger is heat” (and its variant “Anger is fire”) is a universal cognitive model rooted in physiological experience.

Emotional states are similarly structured through vertical and spatial metaphors. English speakers describe sadness through downward motion, as in *feeling down*, while happiness is expressed through upward orientation in *on top of the world*. Uzbek idioms exhibit parallel structures—*ko'ngli cho'kmoq* (to feel the heart sink) for sadness and *ko'ngli tog'dek* (heart like a mountain) for joy—illustrating the same “up–down” schema that connects emotion and space. Both languages conceptualize the heart as the seat of feelings: *heartbroken* in English and *ko'ngli ochiq* (open-hearted) in Uzbek.

Cognition and knowledge are likewise metaphorically understood through perception. In English, *I see your point* equates understanding with vision, while in Uzbek, *ko'zi ochilmoq* (one's eyes open) conveys awareness and insight. Finally, both languages link time with value—*waste time* in English and *vaqtni qadrlamoq* (to value time) in Uzbek—reflecting a shared conceptualization of “Time as a precious resource”. Collectively, these parallels demonstrate that embodied metaphors represent cross-cultural universals grounded in the human sensorimotor experience, supporting the central claim of cognitive linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Environmental idioms, on the other hand, expose clear differences that arise from geography and livelihood. English phraseology reflects the maritime and industrial history of the British Isles, where idioms such as in the same boat and sink or swim metaphorically connect human life and fate to seafaring experience. Similarly, expressions like at a crossroads conceptualize life as a journey involving choice and direction, while under the weather reflects climatic metaphors of health.

By contrast, Uzbek idioms are predominantly agrarian in nature, shaped by the region's land-based economy and cultural traditions. Expressions such as Donning qadri ochganda bilinadi ("the value of grain is known when it sprouts") and Ko'chat ekmoq ("to plant a seedling," meaning to start something new) reveal a worldview intimately tied to agriculture, patience, and productivity. The idiom bo'rining ko'zi to'ymas ("a wolf's eyes never tire") draws upon the steppe fauna to symbolize greed and insatiability. Likewise, qor yog'sa, qish bo'ladi ("if it snows, there will be winter") reflects an acceptance of natural inevitability. These idioms embody the cultural model of harmony with nature, in contrast to the English model of human control and navigation over the environment.

Thus, while English idioms encode experiences of movement, competition, and risk, Uzbek idioms embody growth, patience, and interdependence with natural cycles. This distinction illustrates how environment and livelihood directly influence metaphorical cognition.

Color symbolism constitutes another domain where shared conceptual tendencies intersect with cultural divergence. In both English and Uzbek, colors are powerful vehicles for expressing emotion and moral evaluation, yet their connotations differ according to cultural values.

In English, black often carries negative associations, as in black sheep (a social outcast), while white conveys moral innocence, as in white lie (a harmless deception). Red represents financial or moral deficit (in the red), green expresses envy (green with envy), and blue symbolizes sadness (feeling blue). These metaphors largely align with Western semiotic traditions and historical symbolism.

In contrast, Uzbek idioms associate colors with moral and emotional attributes shaped by local cultural norms. The idiom oq yuzli ("white-faced") denotes honor, purity, and respectability—values deeply embedded in Uzbek social ethics. Conversely, qora kunlar ("black days") conveys hardship and misfortune, paralleling the English negative use of "black." Qizil yuz ("red face") expresses embarrassment or shame, and yashil orzu ("green dream") evokes hope and the future. Interestingly, ko'k yuz ("blue face") refers to physical weakness or exhaustion rather than emotional melancholy, revealing a culture-specific physiological interpretation of color imagery.

Overall, both languages employ color metaphors to express human emotion and morality, but the semantic direction and intensity of color associations are culturally modulated. The English palette is influenced by Christian and industrial metaphors, while the Uzbek palette draws on Islamic ethics, nature, and local perceptions of purity and vitality.

Food-related idioms in both languages underscore the social and moral dimensions of eating and labor, yet they differ in cultural focus. English idioms such as breadwinner and elbow grease link food and work, emphasizing individual effort and productivity—values central to industrial society. Phrases like worth one's salt and salt of the earth reveal a moral evaluation of worth and humility, where salt symbolizes integrity and value. Similarly, sweetheart uses taste as a metaphor for affection, representing the pleasantness of emotional connection.

In Uzbek phraseology, food idioms are equally central but carry stronger communal and ethical meanings. The expression non tuzini yeyish (“to share bread and salt”) symbolizes loyalty, gratitude, and unbreakable social bonds, rooted in traditional hospitality customs. Tuzini yalamoq (“to lick one's salt”) expresses faithful devotion or gratitude toward a benefactor, while peshona teri bilan topmoq (“to earn with the sweat of one's forehead”) emphasizes the virtue of honest labor. The idiom shirinso‘z (“sweet-tongued”) conveys kindness and politeness, paralleling sweetheart but emphasizing speech and interpersonal harmony rather than romantic affection.

These contrasts indicate that while English food idioms highlight individual virtue and personal effort, Uzbek idioms foreground collective morality and reciprocity. The symbolic role of bread and salt in Uzbek culture, tied to sacred hospitality and shared destiny, demonstrates how metaphors of nourishment encode ethical systems and social cohesion.

Across all domains, the comparative analysis reveals a layered relationship between universal cognition and local culture. Embodied metaphors—such as those linking emotion to bodily sensation, space, and perception—are nearly identical across languages, underscoring the human body as a common cognitive ground. Environmental and cultural models, however, show clear divergence: English phraseology arises from maritime exploration, commerce, and individualism, whereas Uzbek phraseology stems from agrarian life, communal interdependence, and spiritual values.

Color and food metaphors further illustrate the interaction of universality and specificity: while both languages use sensory experience as metaphorical foundation, their moral and aesthetic associations differ. In English, idioms tend to privilege pragmatic and individualistic values, while Uzbek idioms reflect a moral universe structured by social harmony, respect, and tradition.

Discussion. The findings of the study point to several important tendencies in the use of phraseological units in English and Uzbek. First of all, universal patterns emerge clearly: embodied metaphors such as up/down, heat, and heart occur consistently in both languages, confirming Lakoff and Johnson's thesis that idiomatic meaning is rooted in bodily experience. These metaphors show that, despite cultural variation, there exists a shared human conceptual foundation that guides idiomatic expression.

At the same time, cultural specificity plays a decisive role in shaping the phraseological systems of English and Uzbek. Uzbek idioms tend to highlight themes connected with agriculture, family ties, and religion, reflecting the agrarian and community-centered nature of Uzbek society. By contrast, English idioms often foreground maritime experience, commercial trade, and individual achievement, which align with the historical and cultural development of English-speaking societies.

The implications for translation are considerable. Literal translation of idioms is often misleading or incomprehensible. For example, the Uzbek proverb *mehmon otadan ulug'* cannot be translated word-for-word into English as "a guest is greater than father." Instead, translators need to opt for an explanation or a functional equivalent such as "hospitality is sacred," which conveys the cultural meaning without distorting the message.

Pedagogical practice can also benefit from these insights. Rather than teaching idioms through rote memorization, language instruction should integrate an awareness of conceptual metaphors. For Uzbek learners of English, maritime idioms may require contextual explanation, while English learners of Uzbek must be introduced to agricultural and religiously grounded expressions. In this way, idioms are not just memorized but meaningfully understood in their cultural framework.

Finally, the study carries implications for lexicography. Dictionaries should include cognitive-cultural notes that explain the conceptual background of idioms, especially when they lack direct equivalents across languages. For instance, the Uzbek idiom *bread and salt* signifies loyalty and shared destiny, and this cultural dimension needs to be recorded in bilingual and explanatory dictionaries to support learners and translators.

Conclusion. The comparative study of English and Uzbek phraseology shows that idioms are not arbitrary but cognitively and culturally motivated. Universals reflect embodiment, while cultural models reflect ecology, livelihood, and religion. Recognizing both dimensions enhances translation, pedagogy, and intercultural understanding. Furthermore, the analysis confirms that phraseological systems serve as linguistic evidence of how human cognition interacts with cultural experience, producing distinct yet comparable patterns of metaphorical thought. Understanding these mechanisms not only enriches linguistic theory but also supports the development of culturally sensitive teaching methods and translation practices. In a broader sense, such comparative research contributes to cross-cultural communication by highlighting shared human conceptualizations beneath surface linguistic diversity. Future studies could expand this work by including other Turkic and Indo-European languages to explore the universality and variability of cognitive models on a wider scale.

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