

SEMANTIC AND CULTURAL COMPARISON OF IDIOMS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract: This article examines the semantic and cultural dimensions of idiomatic expressions in the Uzbek and English languages. The research addresses the problem of translating culturally loaded idioms accurately across languages, a task that often poses challenges for linguists and translators. A comparative-descriptive method was used, with idioms selected from reliable dictionaries and academic sources focusing on four thematic categories: animals, food, body parts, and weather. The analysis reveals that while a number of idioms share universal metaphors, many Uzbek idioms contain local cultural imagery and historical connotations that lack direct English equivalents. The findings demonstrate that literal translation is insufficient and that translation requires strategies such as cultural adaptation or paraphrase. The study concludes that cultural literacy is essential for accurate interpretation and translation of idioms, and that idioms play a vital role in constructing national identity and worldview.

Keywords: semantic comparison, cultural comparison, idioms, Uzbek idioms,

English idioms, cross-linguistic analysis, language and culture, figurative language, comparative linguistics.

1. Introduction

Idioms represent one of the most metaphorical and culturally embedded components of any language. They often encapsulate a society's worldview and convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. As Fernando (1996) states, idioms are fixed expressions whose meaning cannot be inferred from the literal meanings of the lexical items. Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphorical expressions, including idioms, are reflections of deeper cognitive patterns in human thought. In this study, the object of research is to explore and compare the semantic meaning and cultural significance of idioms in Uzbek and English. The main problem is that idiomatic expressions pose considerable challenges for translation and language pedagogy due to their figurative and culturally bound nature.

The purpose of the study is to identify the similarities and differences between selected idioms in both languages and to analyze how cultural context influences semantic meaning. Literature shows that scholars such as Baker (2018) and Kovecses (2010) have emphasized the relevance of metaphor theory in translation studies, while Uzbek researchers like Boltaboyev (2015) and Shukurov (2017) highlight the national-specific features of Uzbek idioms. Despite global interest

in idiomatic translation, there is still limited comparative research focusing specifically on Uzbek and English idioms. Hence, this article aims to fill that research gap and provide practical insights for translators, linguists, and EFL educators.

2. Methodology

The research adopts a comparative descriptive approach. Twenty idioms from each language were selected from trusted phraseological dictionaries, bilingual glossaries, and scholarly publications. The idioms were categorized into four thematic areas: animal-related, food-related, body-related, and weather-related expressions. These categories were chosen due to their prevalence and rich metaphorical content in both languages.

The idioms were first considered in their original cultural context and then evaluated for semantic equivalence and metaphorical imagery. The theoretical framework was informed by Fernando's (1996) classification of idioms and by Baker's (2018) strategies of translation, including literal translation, cultural substitution, paraphrase, and functional equivalence. The analysis grouped idioms into three types: fully equivalent idioms, partially equivalent idioms, and culture-specific idioms with no direct translation. Comparative tables were used to visualize the similarities and differences, while qualitative commentary interpreted the cultural meaning behind each expression.

3. Research Results / Findings

In total, twenty idioms from Uzbek and twenty from English were analyzed and grouped under four thematic categories: animal-based idioms, food-based idioms, body-related idioms, and weather-related idioms. Below is a sample comparison table representing eight idioms (two from each category).

Category	Uzbek Idiom	Literal Translation	English Equivalent	Semantic Type
Animals	Qo'y terisiga kirgan bo'ri	A wolf in sheep's skin	A wolf in sheep's clothing	Equivalent metaphor
Animals	Itdan qochib, bo'riga йўлиқди	Escaped a dog, met a wolf	Out of the frying pan into the fire	Functional equivalence
Food	Oshning tuzi ko'p	The soup has too much salt	Too many cooks spoil the broth	Partial convergence

Food	Yog‘ tushdi	Butter has fallen	A stroke of luck	Culture- specific
Body Parts	Ko‘ngli toza	One’s heart is pure	Has a heart of gold	Semantic similarity
Body Parts	Til uchida	On the tip of one’s tongue	On the tip of one’s tongue	Direct equivalence
Weather	Qor yog‘di	Snow has fallen	A clean slate	Indirect metaphor
Weather	Yomg‘irdan keyin quyosh chiqdi	The sun came out after the rain	Every cloud has a silver lining	Functional metaphor

4. Discussion

The comparison reveals how idioms reflect cultural knowledge and worldview. According to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, idioms serve as linguistic manifestations of cognitive models shared by speakers. Many idioms in both languages reflect shared metaphors such as danger represented by animals (wolf) or goodness portrayed through the heart. However, idioms like 'yog‘ tushdi' cannot be directly translated because they rely on culturally specific imagery. As Baker (2018) notes, translators must use strategies like paraphrasing and cultural substitution when dealing with such phrases.

The poetic and nature-oriented character of Uzbek idioms reflects the society’s agrarian and oral traditions, whereas English idioms often reflect more generalized or globalized imagery. These differences highlight that idiom translation is not only linguistic work but also cultural mediation. This aligns with Fernando’s (1996) view that idioms convey cultural values and attitudes of a speech community. Pedagogically, comparative idiom tables can aid language learners in understanding figurative expressions and improve translation competence.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that idioms are deeply rooted in both semantic and cultural dimensions of language. While some Uzbek and English idioms share universal metaphors, many others remain culture-specific and cannot be translated literally. The analysis indicates that cultural literacy is essential for translators and language learners. Accurate idiom translation often requires functional equivalence, paraphrasing, or cultural substitution. The findings contribute to translation studies and intercultural communication by showing that understanding idioms enhances not only linguistic accuracy but also cultural knowledge. Future research could include empirical testing with Uzbek–English translation students or a larger corpus of idioms.

6. References

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