



COMPARATIVE SEMANTIC STUDY OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

The study of phraseological units, or idiomatic expressions, offers insight into the linguistic and cultural differences between languages. This paper conducts a comparative semantic analysis of phraseological units in English and Uzbek languages. It explores their origins, meanings, cultural implications, and challenges in translation. By examining idioms, proverbs, and other fixed expressions, this article reveals the way language encapsulates cultural values, worldview, and social behaviors in both linguistic communities.

Introduction

Definition of Phraseological Units: Explanation of what phraseological units are, their significance in language, and how they differ from free word combinations.

Aim of the Study: To compare the phraseological units in English and Uzbek languages and to show how culture and language interact in shaping these expressions.

Importance of Comparative Studies: Emphasizing the value of such comparative analyses for translation, cross-cultural communication, and linguistic understanding.

I. Phraseological Units in English and Uzbek: A Theoretical Framework

1.1 Definition of Phraseological Units

In English: Various terms such as idioms, collocations, and proverbs.

In Uzbek: Terms like frazeologik birliklar (phraseological units), qochirma iboralar (idioms), maqollar (proverbs), and frazemalar (phraseological expressions).

Linguistic Functions: How phraseological units are used to convey meanings that go beyond the literal interpretation of individual words.

1.2 Classifications of Phraseological Units

Phraseological units, often referred to as idioms or fixed expressions, can be classified in various ways based on their structure, function, and meaning.

➤ By Structure

- Simple Phraseological Units: These consist of a single word or a short phrase (e.g., "to run").

- Complex Phraseological Units: These involve multiple words and may include phrases or clauses (e.g., "kick the bucket").

➤ By Meaning

- Idioms: Expressions whose meanings are not deducible from the individual words (e.g., "spill the beans"). Fixed expressions where the overall meaning is non-literal (e.g., "to break the ice" in English vs. "birdan ko'ngli yorishmoq, iliq munosabat paydo qilmoq" in Uzbek).

- Collocations: Words that frequently occur together but retain their literal meanings (e.g., "make a decision").
- Proverbs: Traditional sayings that convey a general truth or piece of advice (e.g., "A stitch in time saves nine"). Short, commonly known sayings that express general truths (e.g., "A stitch in time saves nine" vs. "kasalni davolagandan uni oldini olgan ma'qul").
 - By Function
 - Expressive Units: Used to convey emotions or attitudes (e.g., "over the moon").
 - Cognitive Units: Help in conveying ideas or concepts (e.g., "the tip of the iceberg").
 - Conventionalized Units: Commonly accepted phrases used in specific contexts (e.g., "once in a blue moon").
 - By Usage Context
 - Formal Units: Used in formal or literary contexts (e.g., "in the event of").
 - Informal Units: Common in everyday speech (e.g., "hit the road").
 - By Origin
 - Native Units: Originating from the language itself (e.g., "to break the ice").
 - Borrowed Units: Adopted from other languages (e.g., "déjà vu" from French).
 - By Cultural Relevance
 - Cultural Idioms: Specific to a particular culture or language (e.g., "to throw in the towel" in English).
 - Universal Idioms: Found across multiple languages with similar meanings (e.g., metaphors about animals).
 - By Grammatical Function
 - Noun Phrases: Fixed expressions that function as nouns (e.g., "the ball is in your court").
 - Verb Phrases: Fixed expressions that function as verbs (e.g., "give it a shot").
 - Adjective Phrases: Fixed expressions that function as adjectives (e.g., "all ears").

These classifications help linguists and language learners understand the complexities of phraseological units and their roles in communication.

1.3 Semantic Features of Phraseological Units

Phraseological units, or idioms, exhibit several distinct semantic features that contribute to their meaning and usage.

Non-literal Meaning. Idiomaticity: Many phraseological units have meanings that cannot be inferred from the literal meanings of their individual components (e.g., "kick the bucket" means "to die").

Figurative Language. Metaphor and Metonymy: Many idioms are based on metaphorical or metonymic relationships, where one concept is understood in terms of another (e.g., "the heart of the matter" uses "heart" as a metaphor for the core issue).

Cultural Connotation. Cultural Specificity: The meaning of many phraseological units is deeply rooted in cultural contexts, which may not translate well across languages (e.g., "to break the ice" relates to social interactions).

Fixedness and Stability. Invariance: Phraseological units typically resist modification; changing any part often alters or obscures their meaning (e.g., "piece of cake" cannot be altered to "slice of cake" without losing its idiomatic meaning).

Polysemy. Multiple Meanings: Some phraseological units can have more than one interpretation depending on context (e.g., "to let the cat out of the bag" can refer to revealing a secret or making an unintended disclosure).

Emotional Resonance. Expressiveness: Many idioms carry emotional weight or connotations that enhance their expressiveness (e.g., "over the moon" conveys joy more vividly than simply saying "happy").

Contextual Dependence. Situational Relevance: The meaning of a phraseological unit can vary significantly depending on the context in which it is used, including social and situational factors.

Conventionality. Shared Understanding: The meanings of idioms are generally agreed upon within a language community, relying on shared knowledge for effective communication.

Syntax and Structure. Grammatical Constraints: The syntactic structure of phraseological units often reflects their fixed nature, with specific word orders that are conventionalized (e.g., "make ends meet").

Functional Purpose. Pragmatic Functions: Phraseological units can serve various functions in discourse, such as summarizing complex ideas, conveying humor, or softening requests.

II. Cultural and Historical Influences on Phraseology

2.1 Influence of Culture on Phraseological Units

English Culture: Idioms reflecting Western culture and traditions (e.g., "the ball is in your court" refers to tennis, a popular Western sport).

Uzbek Culture: Reflecting Central Asian traditions and nomadic life (e.g., "eshagi loydan o'tdi" meaning "his goat has crossed the bridge," referring to overcoming a critical challenge).

2.2 Historical and Mythological Background

Historical Context in English: Expressions like "swan song" (originating from an ancient belief about swans singing before death) and its cultural significance.

Historical Context in Uzbek: Proverbs and idioms often linked to historical events, agricultural traditions, or famous figures like Amir Timur. For example, "Qirq yil otib doston bo'ladi" (It becomes a story after forty years).

2.3 Universal Themes and Cultural Specificity

Both languages share idioms related to nature, animals, and body parts, but the cultural context gives them different meanings. For example:

English: "To let the cat out of the bag" means to reveal a secret, which has no direct equivalent in Uzbek.

Uzbek: "Og'zi ko'pirib gapirmoq" (to speak with froth at the mouth) means to speak passionately or emotionally.

III. Semantic Categories in English and Uzbek Phraseological Units

3.1 Idiomatic Expressions and Their Meaning

Idiomatic expressions are fascinating as they reflect cultural nuances and linguistic creativity. Here's a comparison of some idiomatic expressions in English and Uzbek, along with their meanings:

1. "Break the ice"

- English Meaning: To initiate conversation in a social setting, often to relieve tension.

- Uzbek Equivalent: "Vaziyatni samimiy o'zgartirish"

- Uzbek Meaning: To ease the atmosphere or start a conversation.

2. "Bite the bullet"

- English Meaning: To endure a painful or unpleasant situation that is unavoidable.

- Uzbek Equivalent: "Tishini tishiga qo'ymoq"

- Uzbek Meaning: To face difficulties with courage.

3. "Piece of cake"

- English Meaning: Something very easy to do.

- Uzbek Equivalent: "Xamirdan qil sug'urgandek"

- Uzbek Meaning: A task that is simple and quick to complete.

4. "Burning the midnight oil"

- English Meaning: To stay up late working or studying.

- Uzbek Equivalent: "Tuni bilan mijja qoqmaslik"

- Uzbek Meaning: Staying up late, often associated with hard work or study.

5. "Hit the nail on the head"

- English Meaning: To describe exactly what is causing a situation or problem.

- Uzbek Equivalent: "Ayni muddaoga yetmoq"

- Uzbek Meaning: To accurately identify a problem or issue.

6. "Let the cat out of the bag"
 - English Meaning: To reveal a secret unintentionally.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "Sirni fosh qilmoq"
 - Uzbek Meaning: To disclose something that was meant to be kept secret.
7. "The ball is in your court"
 - English Meaning: It's your turn to make a decision or take action.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "Barcha mas'uliyat sening zimmangda"
 - Uzbek Meaning: You are now responsible for what happens next.
8. "A blessing in disguise"
 - English Meaning: Something that seems bad at first but results in something good.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "Yomonlikda yaxshilik ko'rmoq, har ishda hikmat bor"
 - Uzbek Meaning: Finding a positive aspect in a negative situation.

While many idiomatic expressions convey similar meanings across languages, their cultural contexts may differ significantly. Understanding these idioms can enhance cross-cultural communication and appreciation for each language's unique characteristics.

3.2 Proverbs and Folk Wisdom

Proverbs and folk wisdom are rich sources of cultural insight, reflecting the values, beliefs, and experiences of a community. Here's a comparison of several proverbs from English and Uzbek, along with their meanings:

1. "Actions speak louder than words."
 - English Meaning: What you do is more important than what you say.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "So'zing emas, harakating muhim."
 - Uzbek Meaning: Actions are more significant than words.
2. "Don't count your chickens before they hatch."
 - English Meaning: Don't assume success before it actually happens.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "Chuchvarani xom sanama, jo'jani kuzda sanaydilar."
 - Uzbek Meaning: Don't make plans based on uncertain outcomes.
3. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."
 - English Meaning: Adapt to the customs of the places you visit.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "Har yerni o'z odati bor."
 - Uzbek Meaning: Follow the customs of the place you go to.
4. "The early bird catches the worm."
 - English Meaning: Those who act quickly or arrive first have an advantage.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "Barvaqt tursang, ishing unadi."
 - Uzbek Meaning: The bird that wakes up early finds food.
5. "You can't judge a book by its cover."
 - English Meaning: Don't judge something based solely on its appearance.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "Kitobni muqovasiga qarab baholama."
 - Uzbek Meaning: Don't assess based on looks.
6. "Two heads are better than one."
 - English Meaning: Collaboration leads to better solutions.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "2ta kalla bitta kalladan afzal."
 - Uzbek Meaning: Working together yields better results.
7. "Better late than never."
 - English Meaning: It's better to do something late than not at all.
 - Uzbek Equivalent: "Hechdan ko'ra kech."
 - Uzbek Meaning: It should be done even if it's late.

Both English and Uzbek proverbs offer valuable life lessons and reflect the wisdom passed down through generations. They provide insight into cultural values and emphasize universal truths about human experiences. Understanding these proverbs can enhance cross-cultural communication and appreciation for different perspectives on life.

3.3 Semantic Categories Based on Emotions and Human Behavior

Emotional Idioms: Expressions related to emotions such as happiness, anger, and surprise.

English: "Over the moon" (extremely happy).

Uzbek: "Ko'ksi keng" (broad-hearted, meaning generous).

3.4 Semantic Peculiarities of Animal-related Idioms

English Animal Idioms: Idioms like "the lion's share" (majority) and "dog-tired" (extremely tired).

Uzbek Animal Idioms: Expressions like "bo'ri o'zi tuz bilan ovlanadi" (wolves hunt themselves with salt, meaning someone who brings trouble upon themselves).

IV. Grammatical and Structural Comparison

4.1 Flexibility and Word Order

English phraseological units tend to allow for some degree of flexibility in word order, while Uzbek idioms are more rigidly structured.

Uzbek idioms are more likely to employ rhyme and alliteration as a mnemonic device.

4.2 Use of Verbs and Nouns in Phraseology

Phrasal Verbs in English: These are common and often semantically rich. Examples like "give up," "hold on," and "bring up" are challenging to translate directly into Uzbek.

Uzbek Verbs in Phraseological Units: Uzbek tends to rely on verbs that are strongly tied to cultural practices. For example, "yuzini teskari qildi" (turned their face away, meaning severed a relationship) shows how actions and verbs are linked to cultural practices.

V. Translation and Cross-linguistic Challenges

5.1 Translation of Idiomatic Expressions

Direct Translations: Rarely effective as the meaning of idioms often gets lost.

Functional Equivalence: In translation, the focus should be on finding a phrase in the target language that carries the same meaning rather than a word-for-word translation.

5.2 Pragmatic Adaptation in Cross-cultural Communication

Key Aspects of Pragmatic Adaptation:

Cultural Awareness: Understanding the cultural backgrounds of the people involved in communication is essential. This includes being aware of differences in language use, non-verbal cues, politeness strategies, and social norms.

Flexibility: Being open to changing one's communication style based on the context and the audience. This might involve adapting language, tone, or even topics of conversation to suit different cultural expectations.

Contextual Sensitivity: Recognizing that the meaning of messages can vary significantly depending on the cultural context. This includes understanding how context influences interpretations and responses.

Politeness Strategies: Different cultures have varying norms regarding politeness and directness. Adapting to these norms can help prevent misunderstandings and foster positive interactions.

5.3 Common Errors in Translation

Discussing typical mistakes when translating phraseological units from English to Uzbek and vice versa, such as literal translations that do not carry the intended meaning.

Conclusion. This comparative semantic study has revealed that phraseological units in both English and Uzbek languages are deeply embedded in their respective cultural contexts. While universal themes such as nature, emotions, and human behavior are present in both languages, the way they are expressed through idiomatic language reflects unique cultural, historical, and linguistic traditions. The study also highlights the challenges of translating such units and the importance of cultural awareness in preserving the meaning behind the words.

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