

COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF PHRASEOLOGY: CONCEPTUALIZATION, MENTALITY, AND COGNITIVE METAPHOR

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Abstract This article examines the cognitive aspects of phraseology, focusing on conceptualization, mentality, and cognitive metaphor. Phraseological units are analyzed as reflections of human cognition, cultural values, and mental frameworks. The study employs a comparative cognitive-linguistic approach to explore how idioms encode conceptual structures through metaphorical and embodied experiences. The findings reveal that while many idioms are based on universal cognitive mechanisms, their realization is shaped by cultural and mental specificity

Keywords: phraseology, cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, mentality, idioms, conceptualization

Annotatsiya Ushbu maqolada frazeologiyaning kognitiv jihatlarini ko'rib chiqiladi, konseptualizatsiya, mentalitet va kognitiv metaforaga e'tibor qaratiladi. Frazeologik birliklar inson bilimi, madaniy qadriyatlar va aqliy tizimlarning aksi sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda idiomalarning metaforik va gavdalangan tajribalar orqali konseptual tuzilmalarni qanday kodlashini o'rganish uchun qiyosiy kognitiv-lingvistik yondashuv qo'llaniladi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, ko'plab idiomalar universal kognitiv mexanizmlarga asoslangan bo'lsa-da, ularning amalga oshirilishi madaniy va aqliy o'ziga xoslik bilan shakllanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: frazeologiya, kognitiv lingvistika, konseptual metafora, mentalitet, idiomalar, kontseptualizatsiya

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются когнитивные аспекты фразеологии, уделяя особое внимание концептуализации, менталитету и когнитивной метафоре. Фразеологические единицы анализируются как отражение человеческого познания, культурных ценностей и ментальных моделей. В исследовании используется сравнительный когнитивно-лингвистический подход для изучения того, как идиомы кодируют концептуальные структуры посредством метафорического и телесного опыта. Результаты показывают, что, хотя многие идиомы основаны на универсальных когнитивных механизмах, их реализация формируется культурной и ментальной спецификой.

Ключевые слова: фразеология, когнитивная лингвистика, концептуальная метафора, менталитет, идиомы, концептуализация

Introduction

Phraseological units are not merely fixed expressions or linguistic ornaments; they represent stable conceptual structures that encode human cognition, cultural values, and collective worldviews. In recent decades, cognitive linguistics has shifted the focus from structural descriptions of phraseology to understanding how idioms and set phrases reflect mental processes such as categorization, conceptualization, and metaphorical mapping [5]. As Alefirenko [1] notes, phraseological units function as “cognitive

matrices” that store and transmit culturally significant knowledge across generations. The present study examines phraseology through three interrelated cognitive aspects: conceptualization, mentality, and cognitive metaphor. Conceptualization refers to the mental process by which humans organize sensory, emotional, and social experiences into stable conceptual categories. Phraseological units, according to Gibbs [3], are direct linguistic manifestations of such conceptualizations. Mentality, on the other hand, captures the culturally specific ways of thinking, evaluating, and perceiving the world that shape idiomatic expressions. Finally, cognitive metaphor – a cornerstone of Lakoff and Johnson's theory [5] – explains how abstract domains (e.g., anger, intelligence, time) are understood through concrete, embodied experiences (e.g., heat, physical objects, spatial orientation). The relevance of this study lies in its comparative cognitive-linguistic approach to English and Uzbek phraseology. While English represents the Germanic branch of Indo-European languages, Uzbek belongs to the Turkic language family. These two languages differ significantly in their cultural histories, social structures, and linguistic typology. As Salimova [7] argues, such cross-linguistic comparison reveals both universal cognitive mechanisms (shared across humanity) and culture-specific conceptualizations embedded in idioms. For example, the concept of “losing one’s mind” appears in both English (“lose one’s head”) and Uzbek (“aqlini yo'qotmoq”), but the underlying imagery may carry different cultural connotations [6].

The main research questions addressed in this article are:

1. How do phraseological units reflect universal cognitive processes such as metaphor and embodiment?
2. In what ways does cultural mentality (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism) influence the formation and meaning of idioms in English and Uzbek?
3. How are abstract concepts like emotion, intelligence, and social relations conceptualized through body-part idioms in the two languages?

The theoretical significance of this research lies in its contribution to cognitive phraseology — an emerging field that bridges cognitive linguistics and phraseology. Its practical value extends to translation studies, second language teaching, and cross-cultural communication, where understanding the cognitive grounding of idioms helps avoid misinterpretation and interference.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative methodology grounded in cognitive linguistics and cross-cultural phraseology. The methodological framework is based on theoretical principles developed by Lakoff and Johnson [5], Gibbs [3], and Kövecses [4], and applies them to English and Uzbek phraseological data.

1. Conceptual Metaphor Analysis

The primary analytical tool used in this study is conceptual metaphor theory. According to this approach, abstract target domains (e.g., emotion, time, intelligence) are structured and understood through concrete source domains (e.g., heat, object, space). Following the procedure outlined by Kövecses [4], idioms were analyzed to identify underlying conceptual mappings. For example, expressions related to anger were examined for the presence of the metaphor anger is heat, while expressions related to reasoning were analyzed for the mind is a container or the mind is a physical object [5].

2. Cross-Linguistic Comparative Method

A comparative approach was employed to identify universals and variations between English and Uzbek phraseology. This method follows the framework proposed by Cowie [2] for phraseological analysis across languages. Each idiom was examined on three levels:

Semantic level: What abstract concept does the idiom express?

Imagery level: What concrete image or body part is used?

Cultural level: What values or social norms are reflected?

Odilova's [6] work on cognitive characteristics of English and Uzbek phraseologies provided a useful comparative basis for selecting and categorizing idioms.

3. Data Selection and Corpus

The data for this study consist of 50+ phraseological units collected from:

Standard English and Uzbek phraseological dictionaries

Literary texts (20th–21st century prose)

Previous cognitive-linguistic studies [3], [6], [7]

Selection criteria included:

Frequency of use in contemporary language

Presence of clear metaphorical or somatic (body-part) structure

Relevance to abstract conceptual domains (emotion, intelligence, social relations)

Availability of parallel or partially equivalent expressions in both languages

4. Mentality and Cultural Model Analysis

To analyze the role of mentality, this study applies the concept of cultural models — shared cognitive schemas that guide interpretation and behavior within a community. Following Salimova [7], phraseological units were interpreted as carriers of cultural memory and collective value systems. For instance, idioms emphasizing collective responsibility or emotional restraint were linked to Uzbek cultural models, while those highlighting individual agency or pragmatic action were associated with English cultural models [2], [4].

5. Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in four steps:

1. Identification: Phraseological units were extracted from sources and classified by target domain (e.g., emotion, cognition, social behavior).

2. Mapping: Each idiom was analyzed for underlying conceptual metaphors (e.g., anger is heat, mind is a physical object).

3. Comparison: English and Uzbek idioms were compared for similarity or difference in conceptual structure and imagery.

4. Interpretation: Cultural and mental factors were used to explain observed differences.

This qualitative procedure allows for in-depth interpretation of cognitive mechanisms without relying on large-scale statistical generalization, which is appropriate for exploratory cognitive-phraseological research [1], [3].

Discussion and Results

Conceptualization in Phraseology

Conceptualization is the process by which people structure knowledge and experience. Phraseological units represent stable conceptual patterns shaped by human cognition [6].

Many idioms are based on embodied experience. For example, body-part idioms (head, heart, eye) reflect how physical experience structures abstract thinking [6].

Mentality and Cultural Models

Mentality plays a central role in phraseology. Idioms reflect national worldview, traditions, and values. Uzbek idioms often emphasize emotional and collective aspects, while English idioms tend to reflect individualistic perspectives [7].

Phraseological units function as carriers of cultural memory and shared knowledge within a society [2].

Cognitive Metaphor in Phraseology

Cognitive metaphor is a key mechanism in idiom formation. According to conceptual metaphor theory, abstract ideas are understood through concrete experiences [5].

Examples include:

Emotion is heat

Mind is a physical object

For instance:

English: "lose one's head"

Uzbek: "aqlini yo'qotmoq"

Both reflect the same conceptual meaning but different imagery [6].

The study shows that: Phraseological units are based on universal cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor and embodiment [5]. Cultural differences influence the imagery and symbolic meaning of idioms [7]. Idioms are organized around conceptual domains such as emotion, intelligence, and social relations [6]. Phraseology reflects both shared human experience and culture-specific worldview [2], [7].

Conclusion

Phraseological units are not random expressions but cognitively motivated structures reflecting human mentality and culture. The study confirms that conceptual metaphor is fundamental in phraseology, idioms reflect both universal cognition and cultural specificity, phraseology plays a key role in understanding language and thought. Cognitive analysis of phraseology contributes to linguistics, translation studies, and language teaching. phraseological units are cognitively grounded, culturally shaped, and metaphorically structured. They reflect both the shared biological and cognitive heritage of the human species and the unique historical and social experiences of particular linguistic communities. A cognitive approach to phraseology, therefore, not only enriches our understanding of language structure but also deepens our insight into how human beings think, feel, and construct meaning together.

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