

A STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC STUDY OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS EXPRESSING EMOTIONS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES)

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the structural, semantic, and cognitive foundations of phraseological units expressing emotions in English and Uzbek. Emotional idioms are analyzed as complex linguistic, psychological, and cultural phenomena shaped by universal embodied experience and culturally specific symbolic models. Drawing on Wundt's emotional dimensions, Anokhin's motivational theory, Simonov's informational theory, Reykovsky's evaluative psychology, Izard's discrete emotion theory, and modern cognitive linguistic insights into conceptual metaphor and metonymy, the article demonstrates that emotional idioms are not arbitrary but systematically motivated. Universal conceptual metaphors—such as “anger is heat,” “happiness is up,” “sadness is down,” and “fear is cold”—appear in both languages, while culture-specific models differentiate English color-based metaphors from Uzbek heart-centered metaphors. The findings enrich contrastive linguistics, translation studies, and intercultural communication by revealing how emotional cognition is encoded through multi-layered phraseological systems.

Keywords: emotional phraseology, semantics, structure, metaphor, metonymy, intensity, cognitive model, cultural connotation.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental mirror of human cognition, and phraseological units represent its most expressive and culturally saturated layer. Emotional idioms, in particular, encode both the biological foundations of human affect and the cultural worldview of the speech community. In recent decades, the study of emotional language has moved beyond classical phraseology to include cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, anthropology, and neurolinguistics. Within this interdisciplinary framework, idioms are approached as condensed conceptual structures that reflect how people perceive, categorize, and interpret their emotional experiences. Emotional expression in idioms is thus grounded in cognitive models shaped by embodied experience: heat correlates with anger because the body becomes hot during arousal; heaviness correlates with sadness because depressive states often reduce bodily energy; upward movement correlates with happiness due to increased physical mobility. These universal patterns coexist with culturally specific imagery. English often encodes emotion through visual and color metaphors (“green with envy,” “white with fear”), whereas Uzbek relies heavily on somatic, heart-centered expressions rooted in Turkic and Sufi conceptualizations of ko'ngil (inner soul) and yurak (heart). Based on this background, the present study aims to explore the structural and semantic properties of English and Uzbek emotional idioms, their cognitive motivations, and the psychological theories explaining the mechanisms of emotional expression in language.

METHODS

The research employs an integrated methodology combining comparative analysis, cognitive-semantic analysis, and theoretical interpretation based on psychological and linguistic models of emotion. A comparative method allows the systematic alignment of English and Uzbek idioms for structural and semantic parallels. Cognitive semantics provides a framework for identifying conceptual metaphors—such as “anger is heated fluid in a container,” “fear is cold,” or “joy is upward movement”—and conceptual metonymies in which bodily reactions stand for emotional states (“cold feet,” “yuragi hapriqmoq”). The theoretical interpretation involves the application of classical psychological frameworks: Wundt’s three-dimensional model of emotion (intensity, direction, quality) ; Anokhin’s theory of emotions as motivational signals regulating behavior ; Simonov’s information-gap theory describing emotion as the result of unmet expectations ; Reykovsky’s view of emotion as social evaluation ; and Izard’s theory of biologically discrete emotions . Data sources include bilingual English–Uzbek dictionaries, corpora, contemporary studies in phraseology and cognitive linguistics, and the author’s previous research on comparative emotional idioms. The study also incorporates insights from conceptual metaphor theory and cross-linguistic emotion research to ensure a multidimensional analytical approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that phraseological units expressing emotions form a multilayered semantic structure in both English and Uzbek, integrating literal descriptions of emotional reactions, metaphorical projections, cultural evaluations, and cognitive models. At the structural level, emotional idioms typically appear in verbal form (“to lose heart,” “ko‘ngli cho‘kmoq”), but noun phrases (“a burst of anger,” “achchiq g‘azab”) and adjectival constructions (“cold fear,” “achchiq qayg‘u”) are also common. These structures reflect Wundt’s idea that emotions differ in intensity, direction, and quality .[Wundt,1896] Anger idioms in both languages display metaphors of heat and explosion, such as “to boil with anger” and “g‘azabi qaynamoq,” reflecting universal physiological responses such as increased blood pressure and body temperature. This supports the cognitive metaphor “anger is heat” discussed extensively in cognitive linguistics. The conceptual metaphor “anger is heated fluid in a container” helps explain idioms like “to blow one’s top,” “to let off steam,” and Uzbek parallels “jahlidan portlamoq,” “g‘azabi toshmoq.” Their shared bodily basis confirms Izard’s claim that basic emotions produce distinct physiological patterns recognizable across cultures .[Izard,1977]

The idioms expressing sadness and loss frequently rely on downward spatial orientation and heaviness, including “to feel down,” “spirits sank,” and Uzbek “ko‘ngli cho‘kdi,” “kayfiyati tushdi.” This aligns with the metaphor “sadness is down,” which is grounded in embodied experience: depressed mood reduces physical energy, leading to slumped posture and limited mobility. Happiness, by contrast, is conceptualized through upward movement (“spirits rose,” “walking on air,” “ko‘ngli ko‘tarildi”), supporting the metaphor “happiness is up.” Fear-based idioms in English often use cold imagery, such as “cold feet,” “frozen with fear,” and Uzbek idioms incorporate trembling and internal contraction: “yuragi hapriqmoq,” “qo‘rquvdan titramoq.” These patterns correspond to the physiological effects of fear, including reduced peripheral temperature and trembling. Simonov’s information theory further explains idioms involving disappointment or emotional frustration. Expressions such as “to be left out in the cold” or Uzbek “hafsalasi pir bo‘lmoq” reflect emotional states arising when expectations are not met . Anokhin’s theory similarly clarifies idioms depicting loss of motivation, including “my heart sank” and “ko‘ngli cho‘kdi,” which denote a decrease in vital energy .[Anokhin,1964]

Cultural differences emerge strongly in metaphorical patterns. English frequently uses color metaphors (“green with envy,” “blue with sorrow”), animal-based metaphors (“as happy as a lark”), and body-part metaphors centered on visible reactions (“blood ran cold,” “hair stood on end”). Uzbek emotional idioms, however, rely heavily on somatic metaphors referring to internal organs—especially the heart (yurak) and inner soul (ko‘ngil)—as in “ko‘ngli yorishdi,” “yuragi ezildi,” “ko‘ngli tor,” “yuragi keng.” These expressions draw from Turkic, Islamic, and Sufi traditions that view the heart as the center of moral and emotional life. Reykovsky's theory explains why many Uzbek idioms encode strong moral evaluations, such as “ko‘ngli keng” (good-hearted), “bag‘ri tosh” (stone-hearted), which function as social judgments. English equivalents “heart of gold” or “cold-hearted” serve similar evaluative functions but rely more on symbolic imagery and less on cultural conceptions of the heart as a spiritual center.[Reykovsky,1970]

Another significant finding concerns the role of conceptual metonymy. Idioms often use physical symptoms as stand-ins for emotional states, such as “cold feet” meaning fear or “heart pounding” meaning excitement. In Uzbek, “yuragi shuv etmoq” and “jonidan to‘yib ketmoq” similarly use bodily sensations to represent emotional states. This confirms that idiomatic meaning is not arbitrary but grounded in motivated cognitive processes, as emphasized in contemporary cognitive linguistics. Idioms expressing resignation or acceptance, such as “cry over spilt milk” and its Uzbek conceptual counterpart “o‘tgan ishga salovat,” illustrate how different languages use diverse cultural metaphors to reach the same conceptual conclusion: lamenting over irreversible events is futile. Such cross-linguistic parallels demonstrate how emotional idioms encode universal reasoning patterns through culturally specific imagery.

CONCLUSION

This expanded analysis shows that emotional phraseological units in English and Uzbek represent an intricate interplay of universal embodied experience, culturally shaped symbolism, and psychological mechanisms. Their structural forms vary, but their semantic and cognitive foundations reveal strong parallels rooted in shared human physiology and common conceptualizations of emotional experience. The classical psychological theories of Wundt, Anokhin, Simonov, Reykovsky, and Izard provide a strong explanatory basis for understanding why emotional idioms exhibit consistent patterns across languages. Cognitive linguistic principles further show that emotional idioms are systematically motivated by conceptual metaphors and metonymies that reflect embodied experience. Cultural differences—especially English use of color and visual metaphors versus Uzbek reliance on heart-centered imagery—illustrate how emotional cognition is interpreted through culturally embedded models. Understanding these mechanisms enriches linguistic theory, enhances translation accuracy, and supports intercultural communication. Future research may explore computational modeling of emotional idioms for natural language processing, contributing to the development of emotion-sensitive AI systems capable of multilingual semantic interpretation.

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