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Comparative Analysis of Concepts in English and Uzbek Verbal Phraseological Units

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Abstract: This article aims to contribute to the theory of phraseology by exploring the conceptual organization of English and Uzbek verbal phraseological units. The present study concentrates on verbal phraseological units encoding domains such as emotion, assistance, self-control, attention, difficulty, social cooperation, hope, and disappointment. Particular attention is paid to phraseological meaning, image schemas, embodied experience, conventionalized imagery, and the contribution of the verbal constituent to overall meaning. The comparison between English and Uzbek verbal phraseological units is carried out through items such as *hit the ceiling*, *lend a hand*, *lose one's head*, *turn a blind eye*, *open one's heart*, and *come to a dead end*, alongside their Uzbek counterparts *qoni qaynamoq*, *qo'l uzatmoq*, *boshini yo'qotmoq*, *ko'z yummoq*, *ko'nglini ochmoq*, and *boshberk ko'chaga kirib qolmoq*. The study reveals that conceptual correspondence does not always lead to phraseological equivalence. Three types of conceptual correspondence were identified: phraseological units with conceptual and figurative correspondence, phraseological units with conceptual correspondence and imagistic dissimilarity, and phraseological units with culturally specific conceptualization. Particular attention is drawn to the conceptual contribution of the verbal constituent, which tends to conceptualize various scenarios of movement, loss, transition, opening, closing, direction, or change. The article provides a cognitive framework and model for analyzing the conceptual structure of verbal phraseological units in English and Uzbek.

Keywords: Verbal Phraseological Unit, Concept, Conceptualisation, Cognitive Semantics, Conceptual Metaphor, Embodiment, Image Schema, Phraseological Meaning, English, Uzbek

1. Introduction

Phraseological units are among the most significant communicative means of language as carriers of cognitive and cultural information, as their meaning is often not exhausted by the statement function of the words that make them up. A lexeme can denote a certain state or quality comparatively directly, while a phraseological unit often describes the same idea more figuratively. Such figurativeness dominates in the phraseological descriptions of emotions, for example, in English and Uzbek: the adjectives *angry* and *jahldor* describe anger directly, but the phraseological units *hit the ceiling* and *qoni qaynamoq* depict this emotion more vividly and figuratively. In the first of these examples, the image of overcoming resistance and reaching a state of maximum aggression is used, while in the second one – the image of the body's internal state changes in a similar way to boiling water. Thus, the phraseological units describing emotions describe not only emotion itself but also its manifestations, be it intensity, assessment, motor activity or another emotion.

The cognitive approach to studying phraseology is built on the basis of the general cognitive linguistics concept about the connection between language structures and

conceptualization processes reflected in them. Lakoff showed that basic conceptual categories in human cognition are formed by patterns of thought, experience, and behavior, not logical concepts [1], while Lakoff and Johnson highlight the role of metaphor as a fundamental cognitive mechanism [2]. Moreover, Kövecses () points out that these cognitive mechanisms can be studied empirically since they are implemented in different symbolic systems, including language [3]. From this perspective, conventional phraseological units are of particular cognitive interest as a source of information about conceptual metaphors and metonymies embodied in them.

The concept is a fundamental category of cognitive linguistics and constitutes one of the theoretical foundations of this study. Kubryakova () characterizes the concept as an interdisciplinary “umbrella” term relevant to cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, and linguoculturology, since these fields are concerned with such processes as thinking, cognition, and the storage and processing of information [4]. From a broader epistemological perspective, Kant also emphasized that the formation of concepts involves the cognitive operations of comparison, reflection, and abstraction [5]. These operations enable a mental representation to be generalized and transformed into a conceptual structure. Concepts are not exhausted by the meanings of lexemes; therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between the concept and its linguistic expression [6]. The distinction between the terminology of “tushuncha” and “konsept” inherent in the Uzbek linguistic tradition is by analogy with the fundamental difference between the indicated pair of concepts [7]. First of all, the source data for this research also reveal the difference between the concept and its linguistic realization. For example, certain language material proves that in the structure of the concept, there is a place for subjective, cultural, associative, metaphorical components. In addition, one can speak of conceptual categories as generalized notions that find their reflection not only in single linguistic signs but also in symbolic structures associated with them. In this aspect, it is also useful to consider the cognitive linguistics concept of phraseology. The study of phraseological units is a priority when analyzing conceptual metaphors since these repetitions, generalized and systematized, act as a basis for language. However, it should be borne in mind that the phraseological description of a concept is usually fragmentary since individual phraseological units rarely fully reflect the characteristics of a particular concept; more often, they highlight one of its aspects.

Among phraseological units, verbal ones deserve special attention. The grammatical and semantic center of such units is a verb that denotes an action, process, movement, transition, and change associated with the idea of loss, receipt, destruction, emergence, or other phenomenon. Thus, a phraseological unit of the verbal type conceptualizes an abstract idea through action, that is, not as an object, but as a dynamic scenario. For example, the English phrase “lose one’s head” interprets the loss of control as the loss of a concrete object, while the equivalent phrase in Uzbek “boshini yo’qotmoq” visualizes a similar abstract idea with nearly the same motor component. Another example may serve the phraseological units of the type of “come to a dead end” and “boshi berk ko’chaga kirmoq”, in which a process associated with difficulties is presented as a movement along or into a spatial structure from which it is difficult to return. Thus, the component of the motor activity in the structure of verbal phraseological units is one of the essential structural-functional features.

Phrasal research has long been dominated by two major trends, namely, the study of imagery and structure. According to Babushkin (), phraseological material is characterized by “picture-like” conceptualizations, allowing for the fixation in language of the image resulting from the speech community’s experience, which contains the criteria for evaluating objects and phenomena and a specific worldview structure [8]. Further, the source data reveal that the figurativeness of phraseology is linked to the internal structure of phraseological units: simultaneously with word combination, specific semantic structures are organized in them, which are associated with a particular mental picture.

Baranov and Dobrovolsky [9] also draw attention to the complexity of phraseological meaning: figurativeness is intertwined with the conventional interpretation of component parts. Dobrovolsky and Piirainen (2005), analyzing phraseology from a comparative culturological point of view, note that similar figurativeness can be associated with different mental images; therefore, phraseology plays a valuable role in comparative linguistic research [10].

English and Uzbek languages provide an opportunity for an informative comparison because of their genetic and typological difference, while the speakers of these languages experience the same phenomena connected with their embodiment. Therefore, a cross-linguistic comparison can reveal similarities conditioned by embodied cognition and peculiarities determined by cultural selection factors, lexical conventionalisation and specific historically determined figurative associations. The aim of this contribution is to identify the conceptualisations of the target concepts reflected in the verbal phraseological units of English and Uzbek languages, determine the levels of conceptual correspondence, and describe the cognitive functions of verbal phraseological units.

2. Materials and Method

The study uses the qualitative comparative-cognitive method of semantic, componential, contextual and linguocultural analysis. The material used is the traditional phraseological units of English and Uzbek languages identified in the phraseological corpora and dictionaries, as well as the examples discussed in the monographs on the phraseology of English and Uzbek languages. The analysis of English phraseological units is based on the studies of Fernando, Moon, Dobrovolsky and Piirainen () and other authors who devote much attention to the study of phraseology as an integral part of the language. The translation of Uzbek phraseological units is based on the study of Rahmatullayev's phraseological lexicography, as well as Safarov's works devoted to the phraseological semantics and the study of cognitive linguistics. The materials presented allow us to form a basis for the hypothesis that it is possible to group phraseological units by their cognitive-semantic features to identify the relationship between semantics, anthropocentrism, and the corresponding phraseological material.

The analysis goes beyond simply identifying translations of phraseological units of English and Uzbek languages by their equivalence. Each verbal phraseological unit was analysed in terms of its phraseological meaning and the dominant conceptual domain behind it. Next, image schemata that may be used to understand the metaphorical structure of the phraseological units were identified. After that, the image component encoded in the phraseological units was singled out. Particular attention was paid to the role of the dynamic verb in the construction of the phraseological unit meaning. The procedure for the analysis of each phraseological unit could be represented as follows:

Concept → Conceptual Feature → Image Schema → Culturally Conventionalised Image → Verbal Operation → Phraseological Verbalisation.

Comparative analysis focuses on the comparison of the conceptualisations encoded in the phraseological units of English and Uzbek languages. In doing so, the possibility of pairing them is considered at different levels – from absolute equivalence through differences in specific conceptual domains to variations at the level of schemata. Such an approach allows differentiating the equivalence of phraseological units of the languages under study at three levels: conceptual, imagistic and lexical-phraseological.

It should be noted that while analysing the data, we have identified examples in which certain conceptualisations encoded in the phraseological units of English and Uzbek languages are partially different. At the same time, there are phraseological units whose conceptualisations are close and the differences are caused only by imagistic components and lexical-phraseological means

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis reveals that the organisation of conceptualisations in English and Uzbek verbal phraseological units is to a considerable extent embodiment-based. Humans interact with the world around them via their bodies, and body-based experiences serve as a basis for conceptualising abstract domains. Gibbs () notes that “our cognition is embodied”, which implies that abstract ideas emerge as regular patterns of interaction between people and the world around them, including social worlds [11]. This explains the role of conceptualisations such as “*head/bosh, hand/qo’l, eye/ko’z, heart/yurak,*” and “*blood/qon*” in the phraseological units of English and Uzbek.

The idea of *assistance* emerges as most conceptually and somatically similar. The expression “lend a hand” used in English and “qo’l uzatmoq” in Uzbek have the same meaning, that of providing practical help to someone else. In both cases, the word “hand/qo’l” stands for human ability to perform an action. The conceptualisations behind these word-groups would be something like *Hand* → *Ability* → *Action Directed at Another Person* → *Assistance*. At the same time, the analysis of verb “lend”/“uzatmoq” in the given phraseological unit shows that while in English the verb suggests temporary giving one’s ability to someone else, in Uzbek “uzatmoq” implies temporary directing of one’s ability to someone else. Thus, despite the overall conceptual and somatic similarity, the two languages differ in the details of encoding the idea of assistance [12].

Similarly, the English phrase “turn a blind eye” has its equivalent in Uzbek “ko’z yummoq”, which is used to denote deliberate ignoring of someone or something, for example, a mistake or undesirable situation. Both expressions are based on the same conceptualisation of *Seeing* → *Knowing* about something or being aware of it. Hence, deliberately stopping seeing something or someone means stopping being aware of them, which is the basis of conceptualisations in “blind eye/yummoq”. In terms of conceptualisations, it would be possible to suggest that both phraseological units embody the idea of *deliberate ignoring of something as a form of protection*. However, the Uzbek expression is polysemous, as ko’z yummoq is used as a euphemism for dying [13]. Thus, when two languages share similar phraseological units, contextual analysis is essential to distinguish the meanings intended in the particular utterance. Consequently, the analysis of equivalent phraseological units should take into account the overall context of a stretch of discourse within which a phraseological unit emerges. If two idioms share the same conceptual meaning or at least a dominant sememe, their contextual usage should be considered as well [14].

A somewhat similar case concerns the phraseological units “lose one’s head” in English and “boshini yo’qotmoq” in Uzbek, which can be used to describe a person who has lost self-control and behaves irrational. The somatic basis of the two expressions is the association of “Head/Bosh” with thought process and hence the ability to rationally control one’s actions. Losing one’s head as a phraseological expression is used to describe a situation where a person is no longer able to think clearly and act accordingly, which is demonstrated by the phraseological image of losing one’s head. The conceptualisation behind it is *Control* → *Thinking* → *Action*. Thus, these two phraseological units share conceptual content, somatic basis and word-formation patterns. This might demonstrate that “losing one’s head” is not necessarily a borrowed expression, but rather a result of analogical thinking based on the common somatic experiences of “head” and its association with thought process [15].

The domain of emotion provides numerous examples of conceptualisations shared between languages, with English and Uzbek being no exception. The phraseological units describing “anger” such as “hit the ceiling” in English and “qoni qaynamoq” in Uzbek are based on fairly different conceptualisations. Hit the ceiling depicts a sudden burst of rage, which can be visualised as a person literally hitting the ceiling above them. The phraseological image behind this expression is *Anger* → *Movement* → *Hitting the Ceiling*. In

stark contrast, the Uzbek expression “qoni qaynamoq” is based on the idea of internal heating associated with anger, which personifies emotions as something hot and boiling. The phraseological image behind it would be *Anger* → *Heat* → *Qoni Qaynayotgan* (*Blood Boiling*). Hence, the two expressions conceptualise “anger” as a powerful emotion that makes a person act out, but the basis of their images are different, which results in differences in the phraseological units as well.

On the other hand, the equivalent expressions to describe “joy” such as “be over the moon” in English and “boshi osmonga yetmoq” in Uzbek share a similar phraseological image. In both cases, “joy” is depicted as being high above the head. Even though the expressions do not share lexical items, their conceptualisation is rather similar. This allows classifying the two expressions as ideologically similar. Hence, both expressions are based on the phraseological image of *Happiness is Upwards*, which is a part of the universal conceptualisations shared between many languages. The fact that genetically unrelated languages share similar conceptualisations demonstrates either their deep logical basis or the results of language contact.

“Be over the moon” (“boshi osmonga yetmoq”) is an example of a culturally specific expression that depicts “joy”. Another phraseological unit in English and Uzbek that depicts a negative emotion is “one’s heart sinks” and “tarvuzi qo’ltig’idan tushmoq”. These expressions are used to describe a sudden change from a positive situation to a negative one. Somatic basis of the expressions is the association of “heart” with emotions and especially the visualising of emotions as something that moves up and down. In particular, “one’s heart sinks” is used to depict a feeling of disappointment or hopelessness triggered by a negative surprise. However, the underlying conceptualisation of the two expressions is similar and can be defined as *negative emotion is downward*. The Uzbek equivalent can be schematised as “Positive Expectation → Unexpected Event → Downward Movement → Disappointment”, while “one’s heart sinks” would be schematised as “Emotional Stability/Hope → Downward Movement → Anxiety or Disappointment”.

The analysis of the conceptual correspondence of the given English and Uzbek verbal phraseological units allows for illustrating some of the most interesting aspects of the phraseological thinking peculiar to each language. First, emotional openness illustrates the idea of conceptual similarity and lexical difference. Second, spatial movement gives an example of conceptual correspondence in image schemas. Third, social relations illustrate the connection between conceptual correspondence at different levels of abstraction. Finally, the analysis also allows for emphasizing the particular importance of the verbal component in constructing phraseological units.

The phraseological units of English “open one’s heart” and Uzbek “ko’nglini ochmoq” embody the same conceptual meaning; however, the correspondence is partially lexical and partly conceptual. Both units utilise the “container” schema that is applied to one’s feelings. The contents of a “container” can only be accessed by opening it, hence the word “open” in English and “ochmoq” in Uzbek. The conceptual correspondence is visible in the fact that the idea of emotional disclosure is linked to the action of unveiling something that was previously closed. However, there is also a difference: while English opts for the metaphor of the heart to refer to one’s feelings, Uzbek uses “ko’ngil”, which is a more complex and abstract concept that may also stand for mood, desire, receptivity, inclinations, etc. Thus, this pair of phraseological units is conceptually similar but uses different lexical items to express this similarity.

Another interesting correspondence can be observed in the phraseological units of English “come to a dead end” and Uzbek “boshi berk ko’chaga kirmoq”. Both idioms illustrate the conceptual meaning of an insoluble problem by linking it to a dead end. The two units utilise the “path” image schema in which motion is obstructed by an impassable barrier. Accordingly, both units conceptualise the idea of a problem as an obstacle on a

“path”, rendering one unable to proceed. Thus, the units embody the same conceptual correspondence captured in the image schema of motion along a “path” with an obstacle. However, while English opts for the metaphor of coming to a dead end, Uzbek prefers the metaphor of getting inside a dead end. Hence, the units are similar in terms of conceptual meaning but differ at the level of phraseological schemata.

The analysis of conceptual correspondence is highly relevant to the study of verbal phraseology since a comparison of the nominal components only would fail to capture the richness of conceptual meanings expressed by the verbal components. For example, the units of English “pull together” and Uzbek “bir yoqadan bosh chiqarmoq” demonstrate a similar conceptual meaning of collective action but utilise vastly different figurative scenarios to express this meaning. While English conceptualises collective action as pulling together, Uzbek conceptualises the same idea as emerging through the same collar. Another phraseological unit that illustrates the value of conceptual correspondence is “be in the same boat”, which is used to signal that two persons share the same circumstances, problems, etc. In Uzbek, there is no phraseological unit that would be fully corresponding to the expression “be in the same boat”; however, the meaning of sharing the same circumstances can be expressed as “be in the same water”. Thus, conceptual correspondence has a greater scope than phraseological equivalence, as it covers both fully corresponding and partially corresponding phraseological units. This consideration is also essential when comparing the units of English “cut one’s coat according to one’s cloth” and Uzbek “Many Individuals → One Body/One Garment → Unity of Action”, which share the conceptual meaning of spending within one’s means but juxtapose vastly different figurative scenarios.

The analysis of conceptual correspondence is particularly valuable in the study of verbal phraseology, since the verbal component often functions as a cognitive operator that helps structure the conceptual meaning of a phraseological unit. This aspect of verbal phraseology has received comparatively limited attention; however, expressions such as *lose one’s head* clearly demonstrate how the verb “lose” contributes to the conceptualisation of psychological loss of control. Similarly, *open one’s heart* and *ko’nglini ochmoq* show how the verbs *open/ochmoq* conceptualise emotional disclosure as the removal of an internal boundary, whereas *come to a dead end* and *boshi berk ko’chaga kirmoq* represent difficulty through movement towards or into a restricted spatial situation. Thus, verbal components may be viewed as cognitive operators that transform relatively static phraseological images into dynamic conceptual scenarios.

Other examples further support this interpretation. The verb *qaynamoq* conceptualises emotional intensity as an increase in internal heat; *uzatmoq* represents assistance as directed extension towards another person; *yummoq* signifies the interruption of visual access; *yo’qotmoq* conceptualises deprivation or loss of control; *ochmoq* represents the removal of a boundary; *kirmoq* encodes transition into a new or restricted state; and *tushmoq* expresses negative change through downward movement. In *boshi berk ko’chaga kirmoq*, the verb *kirmoq* conceptualises entry into a problematic or restricted situation, while in *bir yoqadan bosh chiqarmoq*, “chiqarmoq” contributes to the conceptualisation of collective unity and coordinated action. These examples demonstrate that verbal components play an important role in organising the dynamic conceptual structure of verbal phraseological units.

Based on the comparison of the selected phraseological units, three main types of conceptual correspondence can be distinguished. First, conceptual and figurative correspondence is observed in pairs such as *lend a hand* – *qo’l uzatmoq*, *lose one’s head* – *boshini yo’qotmoq*, and, contextually, *turn a blind eye* – *ko’z yummoq*. Second, conceptual correspondence may coexist with figurative differences, as in *hit the ceiling* – *qoni qaynamoq*, *be over the moon* – *boshi osmonga yetmoq*, and *come to a dead end* – *boshi berk ko’chaga kirmoq*. Third, similar meanings may be realised through culturally distinct scenarios, as in *cut*

one's coat according to one's cloth – *ko'rpaga qarab oyoq uzatmoq* and *pull together* – *bir yoqadan bosh chiqarmoq*. These examples show that conceptual similarity does not necessarily imply figurative or lexical equivalence.

The analysis therefore suggests that cross-linguistic phraseological comparison should proceed from conceptual correspondence to image-schema correspondence, figurative-image correspondence, verbal-event correspondence, and finally lexical-phraseological correspondence. Such a hierarchy helps determine whether two expressions share only a general conceptual meaning or also exhibit similarities in imagery, verbal structure, and lexical realisation.

The findings further show that English and Uzbek verbal phraseology often rely on similar embodied cognitive structures. Components such as *head/bosh* and *hand/qo'l* demonstrate how physical experience underlies the conceptualisation of abstract meanings in both languages. At the same time, culturally specific imagery contributes to important differences. For example, *cut one's coat according to one's cloth* and *ko'rpaga qarab oyoq uzatmoq* express the same general principle of acting within one's means but use different figurative scenarios. Similarly, *pull together* and *bir yoqadan bosh chiqarmoq* both convey cooperation or unity through distinct cultural images. Thus, comparative phraseological analysis provides valuable insight into both shared cognitive patterns and language-specific ways of conceptualising experience.

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek verbal phraseological units undertaken in the research confirms that the phraseological conceptualisation is a complex mental process, where the abstract conceptual meaning, embodied experience, image schemas, cultural imagery, and verbal event structure are intertwined. In this respect, a verbal phraseological unit does not merely nominate a concept, but rather, it selects the conceptual features most relevant to it and verbalizes them in a conventionalised figurative manner, arranging them in a particular event structure through a process of dynamic anchoring. Thus, it can be concluded that a phraseological unit differs from a lexical item by the amount of conceptual information encoded in it and its organisation in a specific structure.

The research has revealed similarities between the phraseological units of English and Uzbek languages, which are explained by the fact that they are both grounded in the same sorts of bodily and spatial experience. In particular, the conceptualisations *hand/qo'l*, *head/bosh*, *eye/ko'z* appear to be universal across two languages, as they are grounded in human physical experience and natural events. At that, the spatial organisation of the phraseological units is implemented by means of such spatial domains as *up-down*, *path*, *container*, *boundary*, *source-path-goal*. The fact that similar conceptualisations can be found in genetically unrelated languages can explain the observed patterns of equivalence between English and Uzbek, including the phraseological ones.

However, the observed data also highlight the areas where language-specific features of the languages under study accounted for the differences in phraseological units. For instance, English "hit the ceiling" and Uzbek "qoni qaynamoq" both express "anger" but verbalise it in a different manner. Similarly, English "open one's heart" and Uzbek "ko'nglini ochmoq" are based on the similar conceptual domain of "container", but attribute different emotional significance to the particular centre of emotional experience. Finally, English "cut one's coat according to one's cloth" and "ko'rpaga qarab oyoq uzatmoq" express a similar idea of practical approach to everyday problems but employ different conceptual domain. Thus, it can be concluded that when comparing phraseological units of different languages, one should focus on the interrelation between conceptualisations rather than the correspondence of lexical items.

An especially interesting observation regards the role of the verbal element in conceptualisations expressed by verbal phraseological units. The analysis revealed that the verbs that appear in such units serve to depict actions that transfer the conceptual meaning

of the phraseological unit from one conceptual domain onto another, or endow it with additional features. In particular, verbs depict motion, transition, transformation, obtaining, losing, opening, closing, direction, or approaching. From this perspective, the verbal phraseological conceptualisations can be presented with the following model:

“Concept → Conceptual Feature → Image Schema → Culturally Conventionalised Image → Verbal Event Structure → Phraseological Verbalisation”.

4. Conclusion

The framework proposed above highlights the ways by which verbal phraseological units of English and Uzbek languages conceptualise the meaning. Its use can facilitate the distinctions between equivalent and comparable conceptualisations, as well as help identify their figurative and structural similarities and differences. The model also highlights the importance of approaching the comparison of phraseological units from a holistic perspective, rather than seeking the equivalence of separate components. Further comparative analysis should be undertaken to operationalise the distinctions identified in this study, which would allow further describing the patterns of phraseological conceptualisations and identifying the dominant patterns in the phraseological units of modern English and Uzbek languages. This can be achieved through quantitative description of the patterns identified in the study using a large corpus of modern newspaper texts.

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