

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR AND CULTURAL MODELS IN UZBEK, RUSSIAN, AND ENGLISH IDIOMS

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Abstract

Idioms carry more than figurative meaning; they preserve the values, beliefs, and lived experience of the communities that use them. Earlier scholarship often dismissed them as fixed, arbitrary expressions, but cognitive linguistics has shown that idioms are motivated by the way speakers conceptualize the world. This article compares the conceptual metaphors and cultural models behind idioms in Uzbek, Russian, and English – three languages from different families, shaped by different climates, histories, and ways of life. The study works across five domains: the body and the emotions, nature and environment, color, food, and animals. Its theoretical framework rests on conceptual metaphor theory, as developed by Lakoff and Johnson and extended by Kövecses, together with the linguocultural approach of Telia and Maslova. Comparative and contextual analysis separates metaphors that recur across all three languages from those tied to a single culture. Embodied idioms prove largely shared, since they rest on common bodily experience, whereas idioms built on environment, color, food, and animals diverge, reflecting each culture's ecology, religion, and social order. These differences matter for translation, lexicography, and intercultural communication, where a literal rendering tends to lose precisely what makes an idiom mean something.

Key words

conceptual metaphor, cultural models, idioms, phraseology, cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, embodiment, cross-cultural comparison.

**КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНАЯ МЕТАФОРА И КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ МОДЕЛИ В
УЗБЕКСКИХ, РУССКИХ И АНГЛИЙСКИХ ИДИОМАХ**

Аннотация

Идиомы передают не только переносное значение, но и ценности, верования и жизненный опыт народа. Долгое время их считали застывшими и немотивированными выражениями, однако когнитивная лингвистика показала, что идиомы мотивированы тем, как носители языка осмысливают мир. В статье сопоставляются концептуальные метафоры и культурные модели, лежащие в основе идиом узбекского, русского и английского языков — языков разных семей, сформированных разным климатом, историей и укладом жизни. Анализ охватывает пять областей: тело и эмоции, природу, цвет, пищу и животных. Теоретическую основу составляют теория концептуальной метафоры (Лакофф и Джонсон, Кёвечеш) и лингвокультурологический подход (Телия, Маслова). Сравнительный и контекстуальный анализ отделяет метафоры, общие для трёх языков, от культурно специфичных. Телесные идиомы оказываются в основном общими, тогда как идиомы, связанные с окружающей средой, цветом, пищей и животными, расходятся, отражая экологию, религию и социальный уклад каждой культуры.

Ключевые слова

концептуальная метафора, культурные модели, идиомы, фразеология, когнитивная лингвистика, лингвокультурология, телесность, межкультурное сравнение.

O'ZBEK, RUS VA INGLIZ IDIOMALARIDA KONSEPTUAL METAFORA VA MADANIY MODELLAR

Annotatsiya

Idiomalar nafaqat ko'chma ma'noni, balki xalqning qadriyatlarini, e'tiqodlari va hayotiy tajribasini ham saqlaydi. Uzoq vaqt ular qotib qolgan, asossiz iboralar deb qaralgan, biroq kognitiv tilshunoslik idiomalar til egalarining olamini qanday idrok etishidan kelib chiqishini ko'rsatdi. Maqolada o'zbek, rus va ingliz tillaridagi idiomalar asosidagi konseptual metaforalar va madaniy modellar qiyoslanadi — bu tillar turli oilalarga mansub bo'lib, turli iqlim, tarix va turmush tarzida shakllangan. Tahlil besh sohani qamrab oladi: tana va hissiyotlar, tabiat va atrof-muhit, rang, oziq-ovqat va hayvonlar. Nazariy asos sifatida konseptual metafora nazariyasi (Lakoff va Johnson, Kövecses) hamda lingvokulturologik yondashuv (Teliya, Maslova) olingan. Qiyosiy va kontekstual tahlil uch tilga umumiy metaforalarni madaniy xos modellardan ajratadi. Tana bilan bog'liq idiomalar asosan umumiy bo'lib chiqadi, atrof-muhit, rang, oziq-ovqat va hayvonlarga oid idiomalar esa har

bir madaniyatning ekologiyasi, dini va ijtimoiy tuzilishini aks ettirib, farqlanadi. Bu farqlar tarjima, leksikografiya va madaniyatlararo muloqot uchun muhimdir.

Kalit soʻzlar

konseptual metafora, madaniy modellar, idiomalar, frazeologiya, kognitiv lingvistik, lingvokulturologiya, tananing ifodalanishi, madaniyatlararo qiyos.

INTRODUCTION.

Idioms are among the most culturally saturated parts of a language: their meaning cannot be read off the words that compose them, and they often preserve the worldview of the community that uses them. For much of the twentieth century they were treated as frozen, unmotivated exceptions, but cognitive linguistics reframed them as motivated by the way speakers conceptualize experience.

Among foreign researchers, Lakoff and Johnson argued that metaphor is a mechanism of thought, by which abstract experience is grasped through bodily experience [1, p.5]. Kövecses brought culture into the account, demonstrating that conceptual metaphors vary systematically across communities, so that shared cognition is realized through local imagery [2, p.4]. Gibbs showed that idioms are comprehended through the same embodied schemas that organize perception and action [3, p.270].

In the Slavic tradition, Teliya described phraseology as the layer of the lexicon where language and culture are most tightly bound [4, p.215], and Maslova developed this insight into linguoculturology, the study of culture as encoded in language [5, p.28]. Dobrovolskij and Piirainen distinguished figurative units shared across languages from those that are culturally marked [6, p.214], while Wierzbicka treated color and value terms as cultural key words [7, p.287]. In recent comparative work on these languages, Ashurova and Yuldoshev analyzed English and Uzbek idioms as cultural artifacts [8, p.2], Kambarova compared phraseological units across the three languages [9, p.64], and Jabborova traced seasonal proverbs through the three traditions [10, p.157].

Building on these approaches, the present article examines the conceptual metaphors and cultural models underlying idioms in Uzbek, Russian, and English across the domains of the body and emotions, nature, color, food, and animals, in order to separate the metaphors the three languages share from those bound to a single culture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS.

The research material comprises idioms of Uzbek, Russian, and English drawn from published phraseological dictionaries and the comparative literature on the three languages, grouped into five conceptual domains: the body and emotions,

nature and environment, color, food, and animals. The comparison was carried out with the participation of forty-six master’s students and five professors of Turan International University, Namangan State University, and Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages, who assembled the idioms and assessed their cross-linguistic equivalence. The study applies comparative, contextual, and conceptual-metaphor analysis to identify the source-to-target mappings beneath the expressions and to determine whether each mapping is shared across the three languages or specific to one.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

The participants judged, for every idiom, whether it had a close equivalent in the other two languages, a partial one, or none. The aggregated results (Figure 1) reveal a clear gradient: idioms anchored in the body and the emotions are shared far more often than idioms drawn from the surrounding world, while those built on color, food, and animals carry the highest proportion of culture-specific cases.

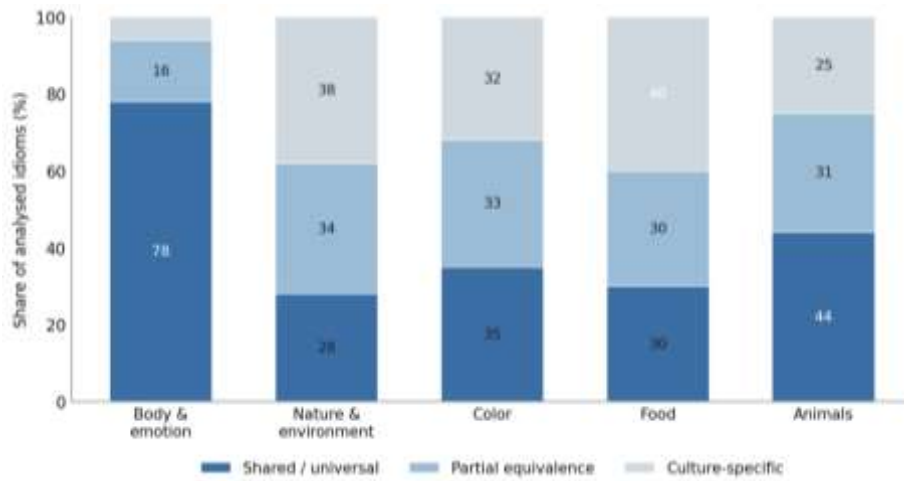


Figure 1. Cross-linguistic equivalence of idioms by conceptual domain.

The body is the most uniform domain. Across all three languages, inner states are expressed through the same metaphors – anger as heat or fire, sadness as downward movement, joy as elevation, and the heart as the seat of feeling (Table 1).

Uzbek	Russian	English	Underlying metaphor
qoni qaynadi ('his blood boiled')	кровь кипит ('the blood boils')	to boil with anger	anger is heat
boshi osmonga yetdi ('his head reached the sky')	на седьмом небе ('on the seventh heaven')	on top of the world	happy is up
ko'ngli cho'kdi ('his heart sank')	упасть духом ('to fall in spirit')	to feel down	sad is down
ko'ngli ochiq ('open-	от всего сердца ('from	open-hearted	the heart is the

Uzbek	Russian	English	Underlying metaphor
hearted')	all the heart')		seat of feeling

Table 1. Idioms of the body and the emotions.

This convergence supports Lakoff and Johnson’s claim that metaphor originates in the body: because all speakers share the same physiology, the same source domains arise independently of cultural contact [1, p. 14]. Gibbs adds that such idioms are processed through the embodied schemas they encode [3, p.281]. The three languages differ in lexical material – fire, sky, heart – but not in the underlying mapping.

Color behaves differently. All three languages use color to encode moral and emotional judgment, but the values attached to a given color diverge, and several apparent equivalents are false friends (Table 2).

Color	English	Russian	Uzbek
black	black sheep; a black	чёрная зависть ('black y')	qora kun ('a black day', dship)
white	a white lie	белая ворона ('a white w', an outsider)	oq yo'l ('a white road', a sing)
red	in the red (in debt)	красна девица ('a red den', a beauty)	qizil (festive, vivid)
blue	feeling blue (sad)	голубая мечта ('an azure am', a cherished hope)	–

Table 2. Color idioms.

Black carries misfortune in all three, but white does not: in English it suggests innocence, in Russian abnormality, and in Uzbek blessing. The pair black sheep and белая ворона ('a white crow') both name the social outsider, yet reach the concept through opposite images. Wierzbicka treats such divergence as evidence that color terms are cultural key words rather than neutral labels [7, p.290], and Dobrovolskiy and Piirainen would call them culturally marked [6, p.220].

The remaining domains confirm the pattern. Food idioms are the most culture-bound: the Russian and Uzbek symbol of bread and salt (хлеб-соль; non tuzini yeyish) encodes hospitality and loyalty with no fixed English counterpart, whereas English food idioms stress individual effort. Animal idioms are partly shared – the fox is cunning everywhere – and partly local, like the Russian bear of clumsiness or the Uzbek camel of patience, which resist translation. Taken together, the five domains describe a single trend. Where idioms rest on the body, the three languages converge, because the source of the metaphor is shared by all human beings; where they rest on the world outside it – landscape, color, food, animals –

they diverge with each culture's ecology, religion, and social order. This refines recent comparative work [8, p.3; 9, p.64; 10, p.158], which records such differences but rarely explains why they cluster where they do, and it supports the view of Telia [4, p.231] and Maslova [5, p.47] that phraseology is the layer of language in which a culture keeps its memory.

CONCLUSIONS.

The study shows that the idioms of Uzbek, Russian, and English form a single gradient, running from the shared to the singular. When an idiom grows out of the body – the heat of anger, the sinking of grief, the lift of joy – the three languages say nearly the same thing in different words, because the body that gives rise to the metaphor is common to all speakers. When an idiom grows out of the world beyond the body, its colors, its food, its animals, the languages part company, in proportion to how closely that region of life is bound to a particular landscape, faith, and social order.

The consequences fall most heavily on translation and lexicography. A translator can usually carry a body idiom across intact, but an idiom of bread and salt or of the white crow must be rebuilt rather than transferred, and a dictionary that gives only the meaning withholds what the reader most needs – the cultural model that makes the meaning intelligible. These conclusions would be strengthened by corpus data and by the addition of further Turkic, Slavic, and Indo-European languages. Even so, the comparison makes one thing plain: an idiom is never merely a turn of phrase, but a small record of how a community has understood its body and its world.

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