

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES: LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL INSIGHTS

Sodiqova Malohatxon Olimjon qizi,
An English teacher at UBS
jamshidahmadjonov@2000gmail.com

Abstract. *Idioms represent culturally embedded, non-compositional expressions that reflect historical, social, and environmental influences on language. This article compares idioms in English (a Germanic language with global, industrialized roots) and Uzbek (a Turkic language shaped by agrarian, Islamic, and Central Asian traditions).*

Keywords: *idioms, English language, Uzbek language, comparative linguistics, phraseology, semantics, culture, metaphor, translation, intercultural communication.*

Annotatsiya. *Idiomalar madaniyatga singib ketgan, tarkibiy bo'lmagan ifodalar bo'lib, ular tilga tarixiy, ijtimoiy va ekologik ta'sirlarni aks ettiradi. Ushbu maqola ingliz tilidagi (global, sanoatlashtirilgan ildizlarga ega german tillar oilasiga mansub) va o'zbek tilidagi (qishloq xo'jaligi, islomiy va Markaziy Osiyo an'analari bilan shakllangan turkiy til) idiomalarini taqqoslaydi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *idiomalar, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili, qiyosiy lingvistika, frazeologiya, semantika, madaniyat, metafora, tarjima, madaniyatlararo aloqa.*

Abstract. *Идиомы представляют собой культурно обусловленные, не композиционные выражения, отражающие исторические, социальные и экологические влияния на язык. В статье проводится сравнительный анализ идиом в английском языке (германский язык с глобальными, индустриализованными корнями) и узбекском языке (тюркский язык, сформированный аграрными, исламскими и центральноазиатскими традициями).*

Ключевые слова: *идиомы, английский язык, узбекский язык, сравнительная лингвистика, фразеология, семантика, культура, метафора, перевод, межкультурная коммуникация.*

Introduction. Idioms are fixed multi-word expressions whose meanings are figurative and often opaque from literal components, functioning as cultural capsules that encode worldview, values, and historical experiences. Cross-linguistic idiom studies reveal both cognitive universals (e.g., embodied metaphors like BODY IS CONTAINER) and culture-specific realizations shaped by ecology, religion, and history. English idioms frequently derive from maritime, industrial, domestic, and ironic sources, reflecting Anglo-Saxon understatement and global influence. Uzbek idioms draw on rural life, animals, family, Islamic motifs, and Persian-Turkic folklore, often employing hyperbole and explicit moral imagery suited to oral traditions. Although idiom comparisons exist for English with other languages (e.g., Russian, Turkish), English-Uzbek pairs remain underexplored until recent years. Emerging research addresses thematic subsets (body parts, colors, emotions, animals) and broader phraseological systems, revealing partial equivalences, analogues, and translation challenges. This study synthesizes these findings to identify patterns of convergence and divergence, contributing to contrastive linguistics and applied fields like translation and EFL teaching in Uzbekistan.

Literature Review. Phraseological research on idioms emphasizes their role in reflecting national mentality and cultural specificity while sharing universal cognitive bases. Kunin (1986) defined idioms as stable, partially or fully figurative units, a framework influential in English studies. In Uzbek linguistics, phraseology draws on Turkic traditions, highlighting fixed structures and cultural symbolism.

Recent comparative works on English and Uzbek idioms have proliferated, particularly from 2024–2026 Uzbek scholars. Djumaeva (2025) conducted a broad comparative study, analyzing formation, meaning, and usage to show how idioms embody cultural identity and pose translation difficulties due to differing imagery. Muattarxon (2025) focused on linguistic structures, semantic meanings, and cultural implications, noting that idioms mirror national identity, history, and values, with translation often requiring adaptation rather than literal rendering.

Thematic subsets receive attention: somatic (body-part) idioms show high equivalence rates for expressions like “walls have ears” (Uzbek: “devorning ham qulog‘i bor”), yet divergences appear in experiential metaphors (e.g., English “wet behind the ears” vs. Uzbek maternal imagery). Color idioms exhibit low direct matches; English “black sheep” contrasts with Uzbek proverbs using non-color elements like husk in rice, reflecting differing moral symbolism.

Emotion-related idioms reveal close conceptual links but structural differences; many share meanings yet vary in figurative vehicles due to cultural mentality. Animal idioms highlight Turkic commonalities (e.g., cat-mouse dynamics) but English often uses irony absent in Uzbek hyperbole.

Cognitive approaches, such as Sugdiyona (2025), compare conceptual metaphors, finding English emphasizes pragmatic individualism while Uzbek highlights moral-spiritual dimensions, despite shared universals. Verb phraseologisms (Ubaydullayeva, 2025) show English reliance on prepositions/adverbs versus Uzbek verb-noun patterns rooted in folklore.

Translation studies underscore challenges: many Uzbek idioms resist direct transfer, requiring descriptive or analogue strategies (Abjalova, 2025). Overall, literature confirms idioms as bridges and barriers in intercultural communication, with recent Uzbek research filling gaps in Turkic-Germanic comparisons.

Methods. This qualitative comparative study synthesizes secondary sources from peer-reviewed articles (2016–2026), focusing on English-Uzbek idiom analyses. A purposive sample (~50 idioms) spans themes: functionally similar expressions, body-part (especially “ear”\“quloq”), color, emotion, animal, and humorous idioms. Selection prioritized high-frequency items from dictionaries, corpora references, and published comparisons. Analysis involved: (1) literal/figurative decomposition, (2)

equivalence classification (full, partial/analogue, descriptive, absent), and (3) source-domain identification (e.g., agrarian vs. urban). Patterns were thematically synthesized without statistical tests.

Results. Three patterns emerged: functional convergence from shared human experience, frequent analogue translation due to imagery mismatch, and systematic cultural divergences.

1. Functionally Similar Idioms

Many convey identical pragmatics via distinct vehicles:

English: “A golden key opens any door” - Uzbek: “Qalovini topsang qor ham yonadi” (find the key—even snow burns).

English: “A leopard can’t change its spots” - Uzbek: “Bukrini go‘r tuzatadi” (only grave straightens hunchback).

English: “Beat around the bush” -Uzbek: “Aravani quruq olib qochmoq” (pull empty cart).

2. Body-Part Idioms

High structural retention for “ear” “All ears”-“Butun vujudi bilan quloqqa aylanmoq”; “Walls have ears” - “Devorning ham qulog‘i bor”. Divergences: “Wet behind the ears” (inexperienced) - “Ona suti og‘zidan ketmagan” (mother’s milk not dry).

3. Color Idioms

Lowest equivalence; English negatives with “black” shift in Uzbek: “Black sheep” “Guruch kurmaksiz bo‘lmaydi” (no rice without husk); “Out of the blue” “Tomdan tarasha tushgandek” (rafter from roof).

4. Additional Themes

Emotion idioms show conceptual proximity but formal variance. Animal idioms share motifs (e.g., cat-mouse) yet differ in tone. Humorous idioms: English understatement/irony vs. Uzbek hyperbole/grotesque rural imagery.

Discussion. Results align with literature: universals yield functional similarities, but ecological (agrarian vs. industrialized) and historical (Islamic/Turkic vs. Anglo-Saxon) factors drive divergence. English favors irony and tools; Uzbek hyperbole, nature, and communal morals.

Translation implications: analogues preserve pragmatics but lose flavor; cultural notes enhance machine/human translation. For Uzbek EFL learners, contrastive methods reduce interference. Limitations: secondary-data reliance; future work needs balanced corpora and bilingual experiments.

Idioms mirror shared humanity and cultural richness, underscoring culturally attuned pedagogy and translation.

Conclusion. English and Uzbek idioms reveal profound linguistic-cultural insights. While universal metaphors enable equivalence, distinct imagery highlights diversity. This comparison advances contrastive phraseology and supports intercultural competence in an increasingly connected world.

Reference:

1. Gadoeva, M. (2024). The usage of somatisms in English and Uzbek proverbs. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/2024XXXX> (specific volume/issue as per source)
2. Khasanova, N. (2025). Comparative study of idioms in English and Uzbek languages. ResearchGate https://www.researchgate.net/publication/397963675_Comparative_Study_Of_Idioms_In_English_And_Uzbek_Languages
3. Kokanova, N., & Jaksulikova, D. (2023). Comparative analysis of English idioms and their equivalents in the Uzbek language. *Modern Science and Research*, 2(7), 107–110.
4. Muattarxon, A. (2025). The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek idiomatic expressions. Phoenix Publication. <https://phoenixpublication.net/index.php/TANQ/article/view/5470>
5. Nuritdinovna, R. G. (2025). Comparative analysis of Uzbek and English idiomatic systems. *Modern Education and Development*. <https://journalss.org/index.php/mod/article/download/4315/4090>
6. Sattorova Umidovna, D. (2025). A comparative analysis of English and Uzbek idioms related to emotions. *International Conference on Linguistics, Literature and Translation (London)*. <https://top-conferences.us/index.php/ICLLT/article/view/3178>
7. Sharipov, R. (2020). Phraseologies and cultural identity in Uzbek language. *Journal of Uzbek Linguistics*, 12(2), 45–58.