

Linguacultural Peculiarities Of Somatic Phraseological Units In The English And Uzbek Languages

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Abstract

This article examines the linguacultural features of somatic phraseological units (SPUs) in English and Uzbek. SPUs—idiomatic expressions involving body parts—reveal rich insights into cultural worldviews and shared human experiences. The study explores their formation, meanings, and functions, highlighting both universal and culture-specific elements. A contrastive analysis illustrates how SPUs encode values, emotions, and perceptions through somatic imagery in each language. The findings contribute to phraseological theory, intercultural communication, and language pedagogy.

Keywords: somatic phraseological units, body idioms, linguaculture, English, Uzbek, intercultural, comparative linguistics

Introduction. Phraseological units are an essential component of any language, reflecting a nation's cultural identity, historical background, and social behaviour. Among these, somatic phraseological units (SPUs)—idioms involving body parts such as "hand," "heart," or "head"—hold particular linguistic and cultural significance. They serve as a window into how different cultures interpret the body in metaphorical, symbolic, and emotional terms. English and Uzbek, belonging to distinct language families (Germanic and Turkic respectively), offer fertile ground for comparative analysis. This study aims to explore the linguistic and cultural peculiarities of SPUs in both languages, identify similarities and differences, and interpret how these expressions reflect the worldview of their speakers.

Theoretical Background. Somatic phraseological units are idiomatic expressions where body part terms serve as the key semantic element. As per cognitive linguistics, these idioms often derive from embodied experiences—interactions between our physical body and the world. Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980) provides a foundational perspective, suggesting that metaphorical structures like "ANGER IS HEAT" or "EMOTIONS ARE MOVEMENTS" underlie SPUs.

In phraseology studies, SPUs are viewed through a triadic lens: semantic opacity, structural stability, and idiomaticity. From a cultural viewpoint, they are linguistic signs saturated with culturally marked meanings.

Methodology. This research employs a contrastive linguistic approach, analyzing a corpus of 150 commonly used SPUs—75 from English and 75 from Uzbek. Sources include phraseological dictionaries, literary texts, and corpora. The units are grouped by body part (e.g., head, heart, eye, hand) and semantic domains (e.g., intelligence, emotion, morality). Comparative and descriptive methods are used to identify structural patterns and cultural connotations.

Results. The analysis reveals both universal motifs and culture-specific nuances in the use of SPUs in English and Uzbek.

Common Themes Across Languages

- Emotion and Cognition: Both languages use the heart and head to represent emotional and intellectual domains.
 - English: *to take something to heart, have a good head on one's shoulders*
 - Uzbek: *ko'ngliga olmoq* (to take to heart), *boshi ishlamoq* (to have a working head)
- Vision and Perception: The eyes signify observation and judgment.
 - English: *apple of one's eye, turn a blind eye*
 - Uzbek: *ko'z qorachig'i* (apple of the eye), *ko'z yumish* (to close eyes to something)
- Action and Responsibility: Hands symbolize action and control.

- English: *to be in good hands, hands are tied*
- Uzbek: *qo 'liga tushmoq* (to fall into someone's hands), *qo 'li bog 'liq* (hands are tied)

Culturally Specific Differences

- **Head as Power:** In Uzbek culture, the head holds deep symbolic significance, often associated with honor and fate.
 - Uzbek: *bosh egmoq* (to bow one's head – accept humiliation), *boshi bilan javob bermoq* (to be held accountable with one's head)
- **Face as Shame and Respect:** The face appears more prominently in Uzbek as a marker of social dignity.
 - Uzbek: *yuzi yorug '* (face is bright – honorable), *yuzi qizarish* (blushing – shame)
 - English equivalents are fewer: *lose face, face the music*
- **Heart and Romanticism:** English phraseology places more emphasis on the heart as a symbol of love.
 - English: *follow your heart, heart skips a beat*
 - Uzbek: Romantic connotations are less frequent and more reserved due to cultural conservatism.

Discussion. The presence of SPUs across both languages underscores a shared human embodiment — universal experiences of using our senses, limbs, and internal organs shape metaphorical language. The conceptual metaphors in both English and Uzbek often align (e.g., *HEAD is REASON, HEART is EMOTION*), supporting the theory of embodied cognition.

However, cultural particularities reveal how languages prioritize certain somatic elements over others. In Uzbek, idioms tend to reflect communal values, honor, and social hierarchy, deeply influenced by collectivist and patriarchal norms. For example, *boshi berk ko 'cha* (a dead-end situation—literally, "a street with a closed head") reflects fatalism and limited personal agency.

English SPUs, conversely, show a greater emphasis on individual emotion, romantic love, and personal achievement, consistent with Western individualism. Expressions like *speak from the heart* or *have one's heart set on something* reflect emotional openness.

Another point of divergence is in *expressing shame, respect, or humility*. Uzbek somatic idioms involving the head and face carry powerful implications of dignity, deference, and social standing—areas less lexically saturated in English. This reflects the Uzbek cultural focus on *face-saving behavior* and *hierarchical respect* in communication.

The comparative analysis of somatic phraseological units (SPUs) in English and Uzbek uncovers important insights into how bodily metaphors function within distinct linguistic and cultural systems. While the body serves as a universal source domain for metaphorical expression, the way somatic elements are conceptualized and embedded in phraseology reflects divergent worldviews, values, and communicative norms across cultures.

Embodied Universals and Conceptual Metaphors

At a fundamental level, both English and Uzbek languages illustrate that metaphorical mappings from bodily experience are a cornerstone of human cognition. As supported by Lakoff and Johnson's theory of embodied metaphor, phrases such as *"have a good head on one's shoulders"* (English) and *"boshi ishlamog"* (Uzbek) rely on the shared understanding of the head as a seat of intellect. Similarly, the heart commonly symbolizes emotional experience in both cultures (*"take it to heart"*, *"ko 'ngliga olmoq"*), suggesting that the *basic conceptual metaphors*—such as *HEAD IS REASON* and *HEART IS EMOTION*—are cross-linguistically consistent.

These similarities emphasize that *biological embodiment* serves as a universal foundation upon which languages build metaphorical meaning. This universality, however, does not negate cultural diversity; rather, it provides a shared structure that is filled with culture-specific meanings.

Culturally Filtered Somatic Symbols

Despite common conceptual roots, the cultural interpretations of body-related expressions vary significantly. In Uzbek, *somatic idioms involving the head and face* carry deeper social and moral connotations than in English. For example, phrases like *"bosh egmoq"* (to bow one's head) are heavily loaded with

implications of respect, submission, and hierarchical awareness. In English, the head is also used metaphorically but lacks this level of *ritualistic and moral gravity*.

Similarly, *the face in Uzbek* functions as a symbol of personal and social dignity ("*yuzi yorug' bo'lsin*" – may your face be bright/honoured), closely tied to concepts of shame, honour, and societal judgment. This reflects Uzbekistan's collectivist culture, where *face-saving* and *group approval* play a significant role in communication. In contrast, English idioms involving the face, such as "*lose face*" or "*face the truth*", are fewer and less intricate, reflecting a more individualistic orientation.

Moreover, the *somatic phraseological repertoire in Uzbek* often involves *emotive and evaluative functions* tied to moral behavior, family relations, and hospitality—core values in Uzbek society. For instance, "*qo'lini ochmoq*" (to open one's hand) metaphorically refers to generosity or willingness to help, closely tied to notions of *collective responsibility and hospitality*.

Pragmatic Usage and Sociolinguistic Context

SPUs in both languages are not just semantic tools but *pragmatic instruments* shaped by the communicative ethos of the culture. Uzbek somatic idioms are frequently used in indirect, nuanced ways, especially in formal speech and proverbs. They are embedded within *context-rich, metaphor-laden storytelling*, which serves not only to convey a message but also to maintain harmony, show politeness, or transmit cultural wisdom.

English SPUs, meanwhile, tend to be more *versatile across registers*, easily appearing in informal conversation, journalism, and even academic writing. For example, idioms such as "*hands are tied*" or "*keep an eye on*" are semantically transparent and pragmatically flexible. This reflects a more *direct communicative style*, characteristic of Western cultures.

Implications for Language Learning and Translation

Understanding the linguacultural specificity of SPUs is crucial in language pedagogy and intercultural translation. Learners of English or Uzbek often misinterpret idioms when they attempt literal translation or apply their native cognitive models. For example, translating "*boshi berk ko'cha*" as "*a closed-headed street*" in English fails to convey its figurative meaning (*a dead end*). Likewise, the English idiom "*heart goes out to someone*" may confuse an Uzbek learner unfamiliar with this emotional metaphor.

Therefore, phraseological competence must involve not just vocabulary acquisition, but cultural literacy and metaphorical thinking. Educational materials should emphasize the symbolic layers and pragmatic functions of SPUs, supported by cultural context and contrastive examples.

Dynamic Nature of SPUs in Modern Usage

Another dimension to consider is the evolution of somatic phraseology in modern English and Uzbek. With globalization and digital communication, new idioms are emerging while traditional ones are undergoing semantic shifts. In English, expressions such as "*hands-on experience*", "*face-time*", or "*eye-catching content*" are shaped by contemporary life, especially technology and media. Uzbek, too, is witnessing adaptations, particularly among younger speakers who blend traditional idioms with Russian or English elements.

Such developments call for ongoing research into the socio-cultural dynamics of phraseological change, especially as SPUs continue to reflect not only age-old cultural values but also evolving social realities.

Furthermore, the pragmatics of SPUs differ. Uzbek idioms are often used indirectly or embedded in storytelling, whereas English idioms can appear more directly in both formal and informal registers. This difference may affect translation, interpretation, and second-language acquisition.

Conclusion. The comparative study of somatic phraseological units in English and Uzbek illustrates how language and culture interact through bodily metaphors. While SPUs across both languages draw from common human experiences, their linguistic realizations reflect distinct cultural values, social norms, and communicative styles.

This research highlights the importance of integrating linguacultural competence into language teaching and translation practices. Awareness of both shared metaphors and unique cultural expressions can enhance intercultural understanding and communicative effectiveness.

Future studies could expand the corpus, explore more languages, or investigate how SPUs evolve in digital and globalised communication contexts.

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