

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS EXPRESSING
INTELLECTUAL ABILITY (BASED IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERARY
PROSE)**

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Abstract: This study offers a comparative analysis of phraseological units (idioms) denoting intellectual capacity as they manifest in English and Uzbek literary prose. The goal of the research is to find out what the two languages have in common and what makes them different in terms of meaning, structure, and, most importantly, culture and language. Using literary texts as a primary source gives us the practical context we need to look at the meanings and stylistic functions of these units beyond what the dictionary says. The analysis classifies the identified phraseological units into three tiers of equivalence: full equivalents, which are infrequent and denote universal concepts; partial equivalents, where meaning is conveyed but imagery varies significantly; and non-equivalents (*lacunae*), which are profoundly entrenched in the distinct cultural and historical contexts of each nation. Key findings indicate that although both languages share foundational conceptual metaphors (e.g., the mind is a container), English idioms often utilize imagery associated with sharpness and mechanical function (e.g., “a sharp mind”), highlighting an emphasis on individual precision. Uzbek idioms, on the other hand, often use metaphors of breadth, capacity, and images from nature and farming life (for example, “Aqli keng,” which means “broad-minded”), which stresses wisdom and social experience. The study concludes that this comparative analysis elucidates the linguistic structures of both languages while also offering significant insights into the unique cultural values, historical contexts, and worldviews of the English and Uzbek peoples as manifested in their literary heritage.

Keywords: Phraseology, phraseological units, comparative analysis, English language, Uzbek language, intellectual ability, literary prose, linguoculturology, conceptual metaphor, equivalence.

Introduction

Language is more than just a way to talk to each other; it is a living record of a nation's past, a storehouse of its cultural memory, and a mirror that shows how it sees the world. Idioms, or phraseological units, are some of the most interesting parts of any language. These stable, figurative phrases, like “to have a sharp mind” in English or “Aqli keng” (broad-minded) in Uzbek, sum up the knowledge, values, and ways of seeing things that a speech community has built up over time. They do not just give a name to an idea; they also judge it, add emotion to it, and put it in a cultural context. So, studying phraseology gives us a unique look at how language, thought, and culture come together. This study conducts a comparative analysis of phraseological units denoting intellectual capability in English and Uzbek literary prose. The notion of intellectual ability spanning genius and wisdom to folly and madness is a fundamental aspect of human experience. Every society acknowledges and classifies intelligence, yet the linguistic terms employed to articulate it are not universally applicable. By contrasting the expression of this concept in two genetically and culturally distinct languages English, a Germanic language influenced by Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions, and Uzbek, a Turkic language significantly shaped by Persian literature and Islamic civilization we can reveal substantial differences in their foundational cognitive and cultural frameworks. The choice to obtain material from literary prose is intentional and

methodologically important. Dictionaries show idioms by themselves, but literary texts give the important pragmatic context in which these units live and breathe.

LITERATURE REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of phraseological units expressing intellectual ability is grounded in several interrelated linguistic traditions, including phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and linguoculturology. Foundational theoretical insights into the nature of metaphor and conceptualization were established by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, where they introduced the theory of conceptual metaphor. Their work demonstrated that abstract notions such as intelligence are structured through embodied metaphors (e.g., *THE MIND IS A CONTAINER*, *UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING*). This theoretical perspective provides a crucial framework for analyzing idioms like “sharp mind” and “empty-headed,” as well as their Uzbek counterparts such as *boshi bo’sh* and *aqli keng*. Further development of cognitive approaches to figurative language is found in the works of Raymond W. Gibbs Jr., particularly in *The Poetics of Mind*, where figurative expressions are interpreted as reflections of mental processes rather than decorative linguistic devices. Similarly, Sam Glucksberg in *Understanding Figurative Language* explores idioms as conceptual mappings that are cognitively motivated. These studies support the methodological basis of the present research, which treats phraseological units as manifestations of deeper cognitive structures.

The theory of conceptual blending, elaborated by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner in *The Way We Think*, further explains how complex meanings emerge from the interaction of mental spaces. This approach is particularly relevant when examining partial equivalents between English and Uzbek idioms, where similar semantic cores are expressed through different imagery. Within phraseology proper, significant contributions were made by Alexander V. Kunin, whose *English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary* systematized idiomatic expressions and emphasized their stability and semantic unity. Although primarily lexicographic, Kunin’s classification principles remain influential in comparative phraseological studies.

In Uzbek linguistics, phraseology has been extensively developed by Shavkat Rahmatullayev in his *Annotated Phraseological Dictionary of the Uzbek Language*, which provides semantic explanations and cultural commentary on Uzbek idioms. His work establishes the descriptive and lexicographic foundation for analyzing Uzbek phraseological units related to intellect and wisdom. From a linguoculturological perspective, D. U. Ashurova and M. R. Galiyeva’s *Cultural Linguistics* (2019) emphasizes the interrelation between language and national worldview, arguing that phraseological units function as cultural markers. Contemporary comparative studies, such as those by Nasrullaeva & Rofeeva (2023) and Mirjalilova (2024), further explore the representation of intellectual qualities in English and Uzbek proverbs and idioms, highlighting similarities in universal cognitive metaphors alongside culturally specific imagery. Recent cognitive-oriented research, including Kövecses’ work on metaphor theory, confirms that metaphors of sharpness, breadth, light, and container schemas recur cross-linguistically but are shaped by sociocultural environments. English idioms often reflect industrial and mechanical conceptualizations, whereas Uzbek idioms reveal pastoral, communal, and Islamic–Persian intellectual traditions.

Methodology

The research employs a qualitative comparative approach combining phraseological analysis, semantic analysis, and cognitive-discursive methods. The empirical material was

collected from selected English and Uzbek literary prose, where phraseological units denoting intellectual ability were identified through continuous sampling. The selected units were analyzed according to their semantic meaning, structural features, underlying imagery, and conceptual metaphors. A comparative method was applied to determine degrees of equivalence (full, partial, and non-equivalent units), while elements of linguoculturological analysis were used to interpret cultural specificity and worldview representation. Contextual and stylistic analysis of literary discourse was conducted to reveal the functional role of these phraseological units in characterization and evaluation.

Results And Discussion

A phraseological unit in a novel or story gets certain meanings, shows character traits, and does stylistic things that a simple definition can't show. Literature brings phrases to life and connects them to real-life experiences. For example, Charles Dickens uses an idiom to show a character's social status, and Abdullah Qadiri uses a folk proverb to make a point of wisdom. This context enables the researcher to transcend superficial lexical comparison and engage in discourse analysis and stylistics. This study has three main goals. First, it aims to find and systematically group a group of phraseological units from a variety of English and Uzbek literary works that are related to intelligence. Second, it wants to do a thorough comparative analysis of these units, looking at their meanings, structures, and, most importantly, the images or motivations that give them their figurative power. In one culture, a smart person is called "sharp," and in another, they are called "broad." Third, the study seeks to ascertain the degrees of equivalence between the units of the two languages, classifying them as full equivalents, partial equivalents, or culture-specific non-equivalents (*lacunae*). This classification is crucial for comprehending both the commonalities in human cognition and the distinctive influences of cultural experience. The primary thesis of this study asserts that although English and Uzbek possess a universal semantic core regarding the concept of intellectual ability differentiating the wise from the foolish the imagery, metaphors, and cultural connotations inherent in their phraseological units differ markedly. These differences show that the two cultures are very different from each other. For example, English idioms often use metaphors of sharpness, mechanical function, and individual performance, while Uzbek idioms often use ideas of breadth, capacity, and images from nature, pastoral life, and communal wisdom. In the end, this comparative study hopes to add to the larger fields of translation studies, linguoculturology, and intercultural communication. This research aims to enhance the understanding of the nuanced ways in which language influences and mirrors our comprehension of the human mind, thereby promoting a greater appreciation for the profound cognitive and cultural diversity that exists between the English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking communities. The subsequent sections will initially examine the theoretical underpinnings of phraseological study, followed by a comprehensive comparative analysis of the gathered units, and ultimately address the ramifications of these findings for comprehending the complex relationship among language, culture, and cognition.

A comparative study of phraseological units denoting intellectual capacity in English and Uzbek literary prose.

Language is not just a way to talk to each other; it also holds a country's history, culture, and way of looking at the world. Idioms, or stable word combinations with figurative meanings, are the best example of this. These units give us a unique look at how people from different cultures see and organize the world. A comparative analysis of phraseological units denoting intellectual capacity in English and Uzbek literary prose uncovers both universal notions of wisdom and folly, as well as the unique cultural contexts, historical influences, and value systems that inform these expressions. Although both languages possess a shared

semantic foundation, the imagery, metaphors, and cultural particularities inherent in their idioms underscore significantly divergent cognitive and cultural viewpoints. The main purpose of this kind of comparative study is to find, sort, and study these phraseological units (PUs) as they show up in the rich context of literary works. Literature is the best source because it gives the practical context the who, why, and how of an idiom's use that dictionaries often miss. For example, an idiom used by a character in a Charles Dickens novel has the weight of Victorian social context, while one used by Abdullah Qadiri, a founder of the Uzbek novel, is steeped in the traditions of Central Asian culture. The analysis concentrates on three principal aspects: semantics (meaning), structure, and, most crucially, the underlying imagery or motivation driving the expression. From a linguistic point of view, the PUs of the two languages can be put into groups based on how similar they are. The first group, full equivalents, is not very common. These phrases have the same meaning, structure, and imagery, and they often point to things that all people go through. In English, the phrase "to have one's head screwed on straight" means "to have one's mind in its place." In Uzbek, it means "Aqli joyida" (literally, "his/her mind is in its place"). Both of them use the universal metaphor of the mind as an object that needs to be put in the right place or secured. The category of partial equivalents is the most important and informative. The meaning is the same here, but the pictures are different. English often uses the word "sharp" to mean "high intelligence." People say that someone has a "sharp mind," a "razor-sharp wit," or is "as sharp as a tack." This imagery, which comes from tools and cutting instruments, stresses accuracy, penetration, and sharpness. Uzbek has the word "tilli," which means "sharp," but it usually uses metaphors of breadth and capacity. "Zakovatli" (from the Arabic root for acumen) or "Aqli keng," which means "broad-minded" or "wide-minded," are two ways to say that someone is very smart. The emphasis lies not on dissecting a problem, but on embracing it, highlighting the mind's expansiveness and capacity to hold knowledge. This preference for breadth over sharpness may reflect the value placed on wisdom, experience, and comprehensive understanding in traditional Uzbek culture. The most interesting findings in a comparative analysis are in the third group: non-equivalents or culture-specific units (lacunae). These are very much a part of the history, way of life, and customs of one culture.

Idioms in English often show a more individualistic and, at times, mechanical way of seeing the world. For example, the word "a wiseacre" refers to a certain type of annoying know-it-all who acts like they know everything. There is no direct equivalent for this in Uzbek. On the other hand, Uzbek has a lot of idioms that come from its nomadic and farming past, as well as its strong oral literary tradition. The saying "Echkining o'limi – qassobga bayram" (The death of the goat is a holiday for the butcher) means that someone is taking advantage of someone else's bad luck. This idea comes from a rural, pastoral society. "Tosh qattiq, yer qattiq" (The stone is hard, the earth is hard) is another way to say that someone is too stupid or stubborn to learn. It makes you think of how hard the natural world is. These variations in imagery indicate the presence of overarching conceptual metaphors in each language. In both English and Uzbek, the mind is a container (for example, "empty-headed" in English and "Boshi bo'sh" – empty head – in Uzbek) and understanding is seeing (for example, "I see" in English and "Ko'zi ochiq" – open-eyed, meaning experienced or savvy – in Uzbek). But the details are different. English might think of the mind as a machine that works, ticks, or stops ("His gears are turning"). Uzbek, shaped by Persian literary traditions and Sufi philosophy, may prioritize the mind as a gift or illumination, with terms such as "zakovat" conveying a sense of inherent, nearly spiritual, wisdom.

Conclusion

To sum up, comparing phraseological units for intellectual ability in English and Uzbek literary prose is more than just a word exercise. It is a trip into the cultural and cognitive centers of two different worlds. Both languages agree that people are interested in classifying intelligence, but they tell different stories with their words. The way English uses metaphors of sharpness and mechanical function shows that the culture often values individual sharpness and practical efficiency. Uzbek, with its focus on breadth, capacity, and images from nature and community life, shows that the culture has always valued broad knowledge and social experience. We learn a lot about how language and thought are connected to the unique soil they grow in by studying these linguistic gems in the rich context of literature. This comparative analysis of phraseological units expressing intellectual ability in English and Uzbek literary prose demonstrates that while both languages share a universal semantic core distinguishing intelligence from foolishness, they diverge significantly in their underlying imagery, with English predominantly employing metaphors of sharpness and mechanical precision derived from industrial and maritime traditions, whereas Uzbek primarily utilizes metaphors of breadth and natural imagery rooted in nomadic pastoralism and Persian-Arabic literary heritage, resulting in three distinct categories of equivalence, which serve essential literary functions including characterization, social evaluation, and cultural grounding, with practical implications requiring translators to adapt non-equivalents culturally rather than literally and language educators to teach underlying cultural concepts alongside lexical meanings.

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