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PHRASEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION OF LEARNING: A FRAME-BASED STUDY OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK IDIOMS

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Abstract: The article proposes a frame-based model of the phraseological representation of the concept LEARNING in English and Uzbek idioms. The corpus comprises 244 idioms (126 English and 118 Uzbek) selected by continuous sampling from bilingual phraseological dictionaries. Following the frame semantics of C.J. Fillmore and its elaboration in cognitive linguistics, the frame LEARNING is modeled through the slots Agent, Object, Instrument, Manner and Result. It is established that in both languages the slots Agent and Object are filled most densely, which reflects the anthropocentric and result-oriented construal of learning. The Uzbek material shows a statistically significant filling of the slot Instrument by culturally marked elements (kitob "book", ustoz "teacher", mehnat "labor"), whereas the English material favors the slot Manner with the dominant imagery of difficulty and endurance. The study demonstrates the heuristic potential of frame analysis for the comparative description of phraseological concepts.

Keywords: frame; frame semantics; slot; concept LEARNING; idiom; phraseological unit; cognitive linguistics; comparative analysis.

Introduction

One of the central problems of modern cognitive linguistics is the modeling of knowledge structures that underlie the semantics of linguistic units. The notion of frame, introduced into linguistics by C.J. Fillmore, denotes a cognitive structure that organizes human knowledge about stereotyped situations and determines the understanding of the corresponding lexical material [5]. Since phraseological units accumulate and transmit culturally significant knowledge, frame analysis appears to be a particularly adequate instrument for describing their semantics: the figurative basis of an idiom can be interpreted as a scenario in which the participants and circumstances of a prototypical situation are distributed over frame slots.

The concept LEARNING is a constitutive element of the macroconcept EDUCATION. In the phraseological picture of the world, learning is represented not as an abstract process but as a concrete scenario with an acting subject, an object of acquisition, instruments, circumstances and results. The comparative frame modeling of this concept on the material of two structurally and culturally different languages — English and Uzbek — makes it possible to reveal the universal cognitive architecture of the concept and its nationally specific filling. Such modeling has not yet been undertaken for the English-Uzbek language pair, which determines the relevance of the study.

Materials and Methods

The corpus of the study comprises 244 phraseological units: 126 English idioms selected from A.V. Kunin's "English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary" [8] and the "Cambridge Idioms Dictionary" [9], and 118 Uzbek idioms selected from Sh. Rahmatullaev's "O‘zbek tilining izohli frazeologik lug‘ati" [10] and the "O‘zbek tili frazeologik lug‘ati" [11]. The units were sampled by the criterion of semantic reference to the acquisition of knowledge, skills or experience.

The theoretical and methodological framework includes the frame semantics of C.J. Fillmore [5], the cognitive-linguistic apparatus developed by E.S. Kubryakova and her school [6], and the theory of phraseological meaning of A.V. Kunin [7]. The procedure of analysis consisted of three stages: (1) definitional analysis of the key lexemes learn, study, o‘rganmoq, o‘qimoq in order to establish the obligatory participants of the learning situation; (2) construction of the frame model with the slots Agent (the learner), Object (what is learned), Instrument (means of learning), Manner (the way and conditions of learning) and Result (the outcome of learning); (3) attribution of each idiom to the slot whose content it profiles, followed by quantitative processing. An idiom was attributed to a slot if its figurative meaning profiles the corresponding participant or circumstance of the scenario.

Results

The definitional analysis showed that the situation of learning obligatorily presupposes a subject, an object and a result, while the instrument and the manner are optional but culturally significant participants. The distribution of the 244 idioms over the five slots is presented in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Distribution of English and Uzbek idioms over the slots of the frame LEARNING

Frame slot	English (n=126)	Uzbek (n=118)	Examples
Agent (the learner)	35 (27.8%)	29 (24.6%)	En.: an eager beaver; Uz.: ilm izlagan to‘ymas
Object (knowledge)	31 (24.6%)	27 (22.9%)	En.: a golden rule; Uz.: oltin qoida, bilim bulbuli
Instrument (means)	18 (14.3%)	29 (24.6%)	En.: the school of hard knocks; Uz.: kitob — bilim bulog‘i
Manner (way/conditions)	26 (20.6%)	16 (13.6%)	En.: to learn the hard way; Uz.: ter to‘kib o‘rganmoq
Result (outcome)	16 (12.7%)	17 (14.4%)	En.: to know the ropes; Uz.: ilm egasi bo‘lmoq

The most densely filled slots in both languages are Agent and Object (together 52.4% in English and 47.5% in Uzbek), which reflects the anthropocentric construal of learning: the phraseological picture of the world is interested, above all, in who learns and what is learned. The Agent slot contains evaluative portraits of the learner, predominantly positive (diligence, curiosity) but also ironic ones. The Object slot reifies knowledge as a valuable, often precious entity (gold, treasure, light).

The most striking contrast concerns the slots Instrument and Manner. In the Uzbek corpus the Instrument slot is filled almost twice as densely as in English (24.6% versus 14.3%) and is saturated with culturally marked elements: the book (kitob — bilim bulog‘i "the book is a spring of knowledge"), the teacher (ustoz — ilm eshigi "the teacher is the door of knowledge") and labor (mehnat — ilm tagi "labor is the root of knowledge"). In the English corpus, on the contrary, the Manner slot dominates (20.6% versus 13.6% in Uzbek) and is built on the imagery of difficulty, effort and endurance: to learn the hard way; to burn the midnight oil; to sweat over one's books; the school of hard knocks. The Result slot is filled nearly equally in both languages (12.7% and 14.4%) and profiles the achieved state of knowing: to know the ropes; ilm egasi bo‘lmoq "to become an owner of knowledge".

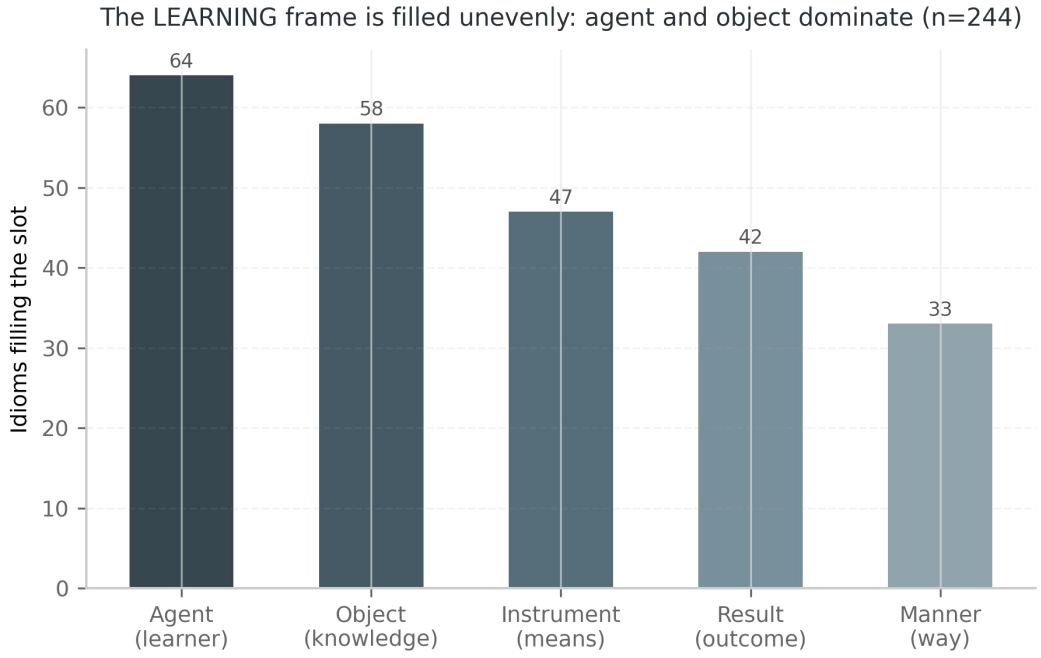


Figure 1. Quantitative filling of the slots of the frame LEARNING in the English and Uzbek phraseological corpus

Discussion

The frame model reveals a common cognitive architecture of the concept LEARNING in the two linguistic cultures: in both cases the scenario is centered on the acting subject and on knowledge as a valuable object. This commonality confirms the hypothesis of the universal

character of basic cognitive frames [6, p. 91]. At the same time, the differential filling of the slots Instrument and Manner has a clear linguocultural interpretation.

The dominance of the Instrument slot in the Uzbek material reflects the collectivist and institutionally mediated model of learning: knowledge is acquired through the book, through the teacher and through socially approved labor. This correlates with the high cultural status of the book and the teacher in the traditional Uzbek society, which has been repeatedly noted in Uzbek paremiological studies [10]. The dominance of the Manner slot in the English material reflects the individualistic model of learning, in which the emphasis falls not on the external mediators but on the personal experience of the learner, including negative experience (the school of hard knocks; to learn one's lesson). Learning is evaluated as valuable insofar as it is hard-won, which is consistent with the proverbial axiology of effort (no pains, no gains).

Methodologically, the study confirms the productivity of frame analysis for phraseology: the frame model not only orders the corpus but also explicates the implicit value judgments. The dense filling of a slot signals the cultural significance of the corresponding participant of the scenario; thus, the axiological map of the concept can be read off the quantitative structure of its frame. This approach complements the traditional component analysis and opens prospects for the automatic frame tagging of phraseological corpora.

Conclusion

The frame-based study of 244 English and Uzbek idioms representing the concept LEARNING has shown that the concept possesses a universal cognitive structure with the slots Agent, Object, Instrument, Manner and Result, while the quantitative filling of the slots is nationally specific. The Uzbek phraseological picture of the world foregrounds the instrumental mediation of learning (book, teacher, labor); the English one foregrounds the manner of learning as personal, effortful experience. The results contribute to the cognitive theory of phraseology and to the comparative description of the concept EDUCATION in the two languages. Further research may extend the frame model to other slots (Time, Place, Motivation) and to the paremiological material of the two languages.

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