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SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PHRASEOLOGICAL METAPHORS: A COMPARATIVE COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This article examines similarities and differences between selected English and Uzbek phraseological metaphors from cognitive, semantic, cultural, and pragmatic perspectives. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Uzbek phraseological scholarship, it proposes a transparent five-dimension comparison procedure covering (1) conventional meaning, (2) conceptual motivation, (3) figurative image, (4) stylistic-pragmatic function, and (5) contextual substitutability. To avoid overstating the evidence, the article is presented as a qualitative, theory-guided comparative analysis of a small set of illustrative phraseological pairs rather than as a corpus-based or statistically representative study. The examples show that expressions can share a broad communicative meaning while differing in imagery, conventional usage, register, and cultural associations. For instance, English be over the moon and Uzbek do'ppisini osmonga otmoq both express intense happiness, but they rely on different conventional images. The analysis argues that conceptual similarity alone does not establish full phraseological equivalence: a translation decision must also account for lexical convention and context. The proposed procedure is a methodological framework for future research and teaching, not a validated measurement instrument. Its reliability and explanatory value require testing on a larger, systematically sampled dataset.

Keywords: phraseology; conceptual metaphor; English; Uzbek; cognitive linguistics; equivalence; translation; cultural semantics.

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Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются сходства и различия английских и узбекских фразеологических метафор с когнитивной, семантической, культурной и прагматической точек зрения. На основе теории концептуальной метафоры и узбекских исследований фразеологии предлагается процедура сопоставления по пяти параметрам: конвенциональное значение, концептуальная мотивация, образная структура, стилистико-прагматическая функция и контекстуальная взаимозаменяемость. Анализ имеет качественный и иллюстративный характер; приведённые примеры не рассматриваются как статистически репрезентативный корпус. Материал показывает, что выражения могут передавать сходное коммуникативное значение, но различаться образностью, узуальным употреблением, регистром и культурными ассоциациями. Делается вывод, что концептуальное сходство само по себе не гарантирует полной фразеологической эквивалентности.

Ключевые слова: фразеология; концептуальная метафора; английский язык; узбекский язык; когнитивная лингвистика; эквивалентность; перевод.

. Introduction

Phraseological units are conventional multiword expressions whose meanings and uses are not always predictable from the meanings of their individual components. They can condense shared experience, cultural knowledge, evaluation, and communicative expectations into a stable linguistic form. Comparing phraseological metaphors in English and Uzbek is therefore relevant not only to lexicology and cognitive linguistics but also to translation studies and language teaching.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposes that people often understand one conceptual domain through another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Spatial movement, bodily experience, force, temperature, and physical objects may provide source domains for describing abstract experiences such as emotion, understanding, social relations, or difficulty. Yet a conceptual mapping does not automatically explain every idiom. Phraseological meanings are also shaped by conventionalization, historical development, register, collocation, and context. An analysis must therefore distinguish a possible cognitive motivation from an expression's established meaning and actual usage.

Uzbek phraseological research offers an important descriptive foundation for such comparison. Rahmatullayev's work discusses semantic and structural properties of Uzbek phraseological units, while his explanatory phraseological dictionary provides a basis for checking conventional meanings (Rahmatullayev, 1966, 1978). Research on phraseological formation and stylistic function, including Mamatov (1999) and Yo'ldoshev (1999), further indicates that idioms should be analysed as established linguistic units rather than as freely assembled word combinations. These perspectives complement cognitive accounts by requiring attention to meaning, form, expressiveness, and usage.

The article addresses a practical problem: apparently similar idioms in two languages may not be interchangeable in every situation. It consequently avoids treating literal resemblance as proof of equivalence and uses explicit comparison criteria to make analytical decisions more transparent.

1.1. Aim, objectives and research questions

The aim is to outline a systematic qualitative procedure for comparing English and Uzbek phraseological metaphors and to demonstrate its use on selected examples. The objectives are to relate conceptual metaphor theory to phraseological meaning; distinguish shared conceptual motivation from shared imagery; consider stylistic and pragmatic constraints; and identify implications for translation and teaching.

The study asks: (RQ1) What broad conceptual domains motivate the selected expressions? (RQ2) To what extent do the English and Uzbek expressions share figurative imagery? (RQ3) How can conventional usage, cultural associations, and pragmatic function affect their equivalence? (RQ4) What criteria can help a translator choose between a phraseological equivalent and a non-idiomatic paraphrase?

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1. Conceptual metaphor and phraseological meaning

In CMT, metaphor is not limited to a decorative linguistic device; it can reflect systematic relationships between conceptual domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Kövecses (2005, 2010) stresses that metaphorical patterns may be shared across communities while their elaboration and conventional expression vary culturally. This position is useful for contrastive phraseology, but it should not be interpreted as evidence that each idiom is a direct realization of one simple mapping. Some expressions may involve metonymy, conventional semantic shifts, or multiple motivations.

Phraseology research also cautions against assuming that all multiword expressions are equally fixed or opaque. Cowie (1998), Fernando (1996), and Moon (1998) describe idioms and fixed expressions as a varied group with different degrees of compositionality, institutionalization, and flexibility. For comparative work, the unit must first be identified as a conventional expression in each language; only then should its metaphorical motivation and cross-language relationship be assessed.

2.2. Uzbek phraseological scholarship

Rahmatullayev (1966) provides a foundational discussion of issues such as semantic unity, polysemy, synonymy, variation, and the structure of Uzbek phraseological units. His O‘zbek tilining izohli frazeologik lug‘ati (1978) is particularly relevant to verifying whether an expression has an established phraseological meaning. Mamatov (1999) is relevant to the formation and development of Uzbek phraseological units, while Yo‘ldoshev (1999) foregrounds stylistic and expressive dimensions. In this article, these sources are not treated as proof of a specific English–Uzbek equivalence; rather, they inform the methodological principle that conventional meaning, stability, and stylistic function must be considered alongside conceptual motivation.

Recent comparative studies of English and Uzbek phraseology have also explored cognitive-semantic and cross-cultural aspects (Abdurahmonova & Kosimova, 2023; Bolibekova, 2025; Mustafayev, 2026). Such work signals continuing interest in the topic. However, the present article does not claim that the subject has never been studied. Its narrower contribution is to make the comparison procedure explicit and to distinguish different types of correspondence instead of labelling a pair simply ‘equivalent’ or ‘different’. Full bibliographic metadata for recent sources should be checked against the original journal records before submission.

2.3. Working definitions

In this article, a phraseological metaphor is a conventional multiword expression whose established figurative meaning can plausibly be related to a metaphorical mapping. 'Conceptual correspondence' refers to a comparable broad way of conceptualizing an experience; 'image correspondence' refers to similarity between the lexical images used; 'semantic correspondence' concerns the conventional meanings of the expressions; and 'contextual substitutability' concerns whether one expression can replace the other in a particular communicative context without an unacceptable change in meaning, tone, or naturalness. These dimensions overlap, but they are not identical.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design and scope

The study uses qualitative contrastive analysis informed by conceptual metaphor theory and descriptive phraseology. The examples below are purposively selected illustrations intended to demonstrate the comparison procedure. They are not drawn from a documented balanced corpus, and no frequency claims or statistical generalizations are made. Accordingly, findings are framed as analytical observations about the examples, not as conclusions about all English or Uzbek phraseological metaphors.

3.2. Analytical procedure

Each pair is considered through five dimensions: (1) conventional meaning, checked against reliable dictionaries or established usage; (2) conceptual motivation, identifying the source and target domains where a plausible mapping can be argued; (3) image correspondence, examining whether the expressions use the same or different figurative images; (4) stylistic-pragmatic function, considering register, expressiveness, and communicative purpose; and (5) contextual substitutability, asking whether the expressions can serve as translations in a specific context. The five dimensions are a proposed descriptive checklist, not a validated numerical scale. No aggregate score is assigned because the present dataset and coding procedure are insufficient to support quantitative measurement.

The analysis follows three safeguards. First, literal word-by-word similarity is not treated as sufficient evidence of equivalence. Second, the proposed conceptual mapping is described as an interpretation rather than an unquestionable fact where alternative explanations are possible. Third, examples are evaluated in context where possible; when no authentic contextual passage is supplied, contextual substitutability is marked as provisional.

4. Results

The illustrative comparisons suggest three broad patterns: (a) expressions with closely aligned semantic and bodily/spatial imagery; (b) expressions with a similar communicative meaning but different conventional images; and (c) expressions whose apparent similarity requires contextual checking. Table 1 summarizes the selected pairs. Uzbek spellings are given in Latin script; the table should be treated as an analytical demonstration and not as a frequency-ranked inventory.

English expression	Uzbek expression	Shared meaning / domain	Image relation	Provisional translation note

lose one's head	boshini yo'qotmoq	Lose composure; confusion or panic	Close bodily image	Potentially close equivalent; check intensity and context.
lend a hand	qo'l uzatmoq	Help or offer assistance	Shared hand/action image	Close conceptual and imagistic correspondence, but collocations differ by context.
be over the moon	do'ppisini osmonga otmoq	Feel extremely happy	Different images; similar affective meaning	Functional equivalent may be possible; imagery and tone are not identical.
come to a dead end	boshi berk ko'chaga kirib qolmoq	Reach an impasse	Comparable spatial blockage image	Possible equivalent; grammatical form and collocation require context-sensitive adjustment.
open one's heart	ko'nglini ochmoq	Reveal feelings or speak sincerely	Partial image correspondence	Meaning is close in some contexts; Uzbek ko'ngil carries culturally and semantically broad associations.
turn a blind eye	ko'z yummoq	Deliberately ignore something	Related eye/vision image	Often close in meaning, but pragmatic force and degree of deliberate tolerance should be checked.

Table 1. Illustrative English–Uzbek phraseological comparisons.

4.1. Close conceptual and imagistic correspondence

The pair lose one's head – boshini yo'qotmoq is based on a closely aligned bodily image. In both expressions, the head can be interpreted as associated with rational control or composure;

losing it figuratively represents confusion, panic, or inability to think clearly. This supports a relatively close comparison at the image level. Nevertheless, the expressions should not be assumed to match in every collocation or degree of intensity. A sentence describing momentary surprise may require a different Uzbek rendering from one describing sustained panic.

The pair lend a hand – qo‘l uzatmoq also presents a shared bodily image linked to assistance. The hand is associated with practical action and help, allowing a similar conceptual motivation in both languages. Yet the English verb lend and the Uzbek verb uzatmoq are not literal equivalents in all uses. The conventional phrase, surrounding syntax, and intended degree of help should be checked before choosing a translation. This example illustrates that image similarity can support equivalence but cannot replace contextual analysis.

4.2. Shared meaning with different conventional imagery

Be over the moon and do‘ppisini osmonga otmoq can both communicate intense happiness, but their conventional images differ. The English expression evokes the moon and a position beyond it, while the Uzbek expression depicts throwing one’s skullcap upward. The two images should not be presented as culturally identical. Rather, they are potential functional equivalents in contexts where the intended meaning is strong joy and where an expressive idiom is appropriate. If the surrounding text emphasizes a particular image, character voice, or cultural setting, a translator may retain the source image with explanation or choose a less idiomatic translation.

This contrast demonstrates the difference between semantic equivalence and imagistic equivalence. A translation can preserve the emotional message while replacing the source-language image with a conventional target-language expression. Such a strategy may improve naturalness but reduce the visibility of the original metaphor. The appropriate choice depends on the purpose of translation, audience, genre, and the importance of imagery in the source text.

4.3. Spatial blockage and the representation of an impasse

Come to a dead end and boshi berk ko‘chaga kirib qolmoq conceptualize a difficult or unsolvable situation through spatial movement and blocked passage. Both expressions can be associated with the broad mapping PROGRESS IS MOVEMENT ALONG A PATH: when the path is blocked, progress becomes impossible. Their images are not identical in every lexical detail, but they share a salient spatial structure. In Uzbek, the form ‘boshi berk ko‘chaga kirib qolmoq’ is used here as a candidate counterpart; its exact conventional status and preferred form should be verified in a phraseological dictionary and authentic examples before the article is submitted. This verification is important because an apparently plausible phrase is not automatically a dictionary-established idiom.

4.4. Emotion, inner experience, and perception

Open one’s heart and ko‘nglini ochmoq can both describe revealing private feelings or speaking sincerely. The comparison is not simply a word-for-word match: English heart and Uzbek ko‘ngil occupy overlapping but non-identical semantic fields. The Uzbek word ko‘ngil can refer to inner feeling, desire, mood, or personal emotional experience, depending on context. This broader semantic range may create a natural target-language expression even when the lexical images differ. A translator should therefore assess the communicative act—confession, emotional disclosure,

reconciliation, or frank conversation—rather than assume that the nouns have identical cultural meanings.

Turn a blind eye and ko‘z yummoq similarly use the eye/vision domain to express deliberate non-attention or refusal to acknowledge something. The shared perceptual image makes the pair promising, but pragmatic force still matters. Depending on context, the English phrase may suggest conscious tolerance of wrongdoing, whereas a target-language expression may imply a somewhat different attitude or degree of responsibility. The translation should preserve the speaker’s stance, not only the general idea of ignoring.

5. Discussion

The examples support a central methodological claim: phraseological equivalence is multidimensional. At least three distinct relationships should be kept apart. First, semantic or functional correspondence occurs when expressions communicate a similar message in a given context. Second, conceptual correspondence occurs when a similar mapping or experiential structure motivates the expressions. Third, imagistic correspondence occurs when the expressions use comparable lexical images. A pair may show one type of correspondence without showing all three.

The findings are compatible with the view that metaphorical thought may have shared experiential foundations while its linguistic realization varies across cultures (Kövecses, 2005). Bodily and spatial experiences can provide accessible conceptual resources in both languages, but individual expressions become conventional through the history and practices of particular speech communities. This is why shared embodiment should be treated as a possible explanatory factor rather than as a guarantee of identical phraseological systems.

The comparison also supports the relevance of Uzbek descriptive phraseology. Attention to semantic stability, variation, and stylistic value (Rahmatullayev, 1966, 1978; Mamatov, 1999; Yo‘ldoshev, 1999) helps prevent an exclusively cognitive account from overlooking lexical convention. CMT can explain a plausible relationship between image and abstract meaning, but it cannot by itself establish dictionary status, frequency, register, or substitutability. Those questions require lexicographic and contextual evidence.

For translation, the practical implication is to choose an equivalent through a sequence of decisions: identify the source expression’s contextual meaning; establish its stylistic and pragmatic function; check whether a conventional Uzbek expression has a comparable meaning; compare imagery; and decide whether naturalness, cultural specificity, or image retention is the priority. When no idiomatic counterpart meets the communicative requirements, a paraphrase may be preferable to a forced idiom. In teaching, students can use the five dimensions to justify their translation choices rather than rely on literal matching alone.

The proposed five-dimensional procedure is not claimed to be a wholly unprecedented theory or a validated model. Its contribution is procedural: it makes several often-conflated comparison questions explicit in one checklist. Establishing novelty more strongly would require a systematic review of existing equivalence frameworks and a direct comparison of their categories with the

proposed dimensions. The present article therefore positions the procedure as a working analytical framework for further testing.

6. Limitations and directions for further research

The most important limitation is the small, illustrative dataset. Six pairs cannot represent the full range of English and Uzbek phraseology, and they do not support claims about which metaphorical domains are most frequent or culturally dominant. In addition, the examples have not been extracted through a reproducible corpus query. Some proposed counterparts—especially expressions whose conventional status may vary—must be checked against reliable dictionaries and authentic contextual evidence. The analysis is qualitative and does not report inter-rater agreement or a quantitative equivalence score.

Future research should build a documented dataset from named English and Uzbek phraseological dictionaries and, where available, balanced corpora. Inclusion criteria should be stated in advance, and each candidate expression should be accompanied by its dictionary definition and at least one contextual example. Two or more trained annotators could independently code the five dimensions, discuss disagreements, and report an appropriate reliability measure. A larger dataset would also allow researchers to compare metaphor domains, register, and translation strategies without generalizing from a handful of examples.

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7. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated a qualitative procedure for comparing selected English and Uzbek phraseological metaphors through conventional meaning, conceptual motivation, figurative image, stylistic-pragmatic function, and contextual substitutability. The examples suggest that expressions can share a communicative meaning and a broad conceptual basis while differing in conventional imagery and usage. Close image-based correspondences such as lose one's head – boshini yo'qotmoq may be easier to translate idiomatically, whereas be over the moon – do'ppisini osmonga otmoq illustrates how a similar emotional meaning can be expressed through different images.

The main conclusion is that conceptual similarity is necessary in some comparisons but is not sufficient to establish full phraseological equivalence. Reliable analysis must combine cognitive interpretation with lexicographic verification and contextual evaluation. The five-dimensional checklist offers a transparent starting point for translation analysis and classroom practice, but its usefulness and reliability remain to be tested on a larger, systematically selected dataset.

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