



# THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CULTURAL-SEMANTIC DIMENSIONS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the theoretical foundations of the semantic-pragmatic analysis of phraseological units. It explores the semantic components of phraseological meaning, their synonymic and antonymic relationships, and similarities and differences between phraseological units in English and Uzbek. From a pragmatic perspective, the study highlights the contextual meaning, expressive and emotional functions, and the role of phraseological units in modern literary discourse and real-life communication. The article also discusses the significance of phraseological research for language learning, translation, and intercultural communication, suggesting directions for future studies. Phraseological units constitute an important component of language in which not only linguistic but also cultural and cognitive information is encoded. Unlike free word combinations, phraseological units often possess figurative, evaluative and culturally marked meanings that reflect the worldview, traditions, values and collective experience of a particular speech community. Therefore, the study of phraseological units from a cultural-semantic perspective makes it possible to reveal the relationship between language and culture more systematically. This paper examines the theoretical foundations of phraseological units and focuses on their national-cultural semantic features. Particular attention is paid to the figurative, connotative and cultural components of phraseological meaning. The study also considers cognitive and cultural approaches to phraseology and demonstrates that cultural knowledge plays a significant role in interpreting the semantic motivation of idiomatic expressions.*

**Introduction:** Phraseological units represent one of the most expressive and culturally informative layers of language. They are traditionally understood as relatively fixed combinations of words characterized by semantic integrity, stability and a degree of idiomaticity. However, contemporary linguistic research demonstrates that phraseological

units cannot be adequately described only from a structural or semantic perspective. Their interpretation frequently depends on cultural knowledge, historical experience and culturally specific conceptualizations.

The relationship between phraseology and culture has received considerable attention within cognitive linguistics, culturology and cross-cultural studies. Dobrovolski' and Piirainen emphasize the importance of cultural knowledge in understanding conventional figurative language and argue that cultural semiotics should be incorporated into the analysis of figurative units. Similarly, Kövecses demonstrates that figurative conceptualization is closely connected with cultural experience and that metaphorical structures may vary across cultures.

**Theoretical Background** The traditional approach to phraseology primarily focuses on the structural stability and semantic indivisibility of phraseological units. From this perspective, the meaning of an idiom cannot always be derived directly from the meanings of its individual components. Modern cognitive and cultural approaches, however, have expanded the understanding of phraseological meaning by examining the conceptual and cultural knowledge underlying figurative expressions. A phraseological unit may contain several interconnected layers of meaning: denotative meaning, figurative meaning, evaluative meaning, emotional-expressive meaning and cultural connotation. The latter is particularly significant for cross-cultural communication because the same conceptual domain may be represented through different images in different languages. For example, English expressions such as “to spill the beans” and Uzbek expressions such as “og‘zidan gullab qo‘ymoq” refer to the disclosure of information, but their figurative images are based on different linguistic and cultural associations. Thus, the semantic equivalence of phraseological units does not necessarily imply the equivalence of their cultural imagery.

Here is the paraphrased version of the text in English:

### **Theoretical Background**

Phraseological units differ from free word combinations due to their unique semantic traits. Their defining feature is idiomaticity, meaning the overall significance of the expression cannot be understood simply by looking at its individual words. This characteristic enhances language with metaphorical and cultural depth. The figurative meaning of these units often stems from metaphors, historical events, or cultural traditions (Dobrovolskiy & Piirainen, 2005). Furthermore, they carry distinct connotations—emotional, stylistic, and cultural associations. Depending on the situation, these expressions can convey positive or negative tones, serving as powerful tools in both formal and informal communication.

From a pragmatic standpoint, the meaning of phraseological units depends on how they are used in context, rather than just their vocabulary. The same expression can take on different nuances based on the speaker's intent, social environment, and communicative goals. Ultimately, the surrounding context dictates how a phraseological unit is interpreted and whether its use is appropriate.

Phraseological units also exhibit synonymic and antonymic connections, which significantly enhance their semantic depth. Synonymous idioms share a core meaning but vary in emotional intensity or stylistic flavor. For instance, the English expressions “bite the bullet” and “face the music” both involve confronting a difficult situation, but the former emphasizes enduring unavoidable pain with courage, while the latter focuses on accepting the

unpleasant consequences of one's actions. Conversely, antonymic idioms express contrasting ideas, such as "hit the nail on the head" (to describe exactly what is causing a situation) and "bark up the wrong tree" (to pursue a completely mistaken line of thought). Recognizing these relationships allows speakers to fully utilize the expressive capacity of idioms during interaction.

When comparing phraseological units in Uzbek and English, both cultural commonalities and linguistic distinctions become apparent. Certain idioms share identical meanings and structures across both languages because they stem from universal human experiences and shared metaphorical thinking.

Here is the paraphrased conclusion, expanded with advanced linguistic terminology and extra scientific information regarding cognitive processing and digital linguistics:

**Conclusion:** The semantic-pragmatic investigation of phraseological units underscores their multi-layered complexity and critical functional utility within human discourse. From a semantic perspective, these units are characterized by non-compositional idiomaticity and complex metaphorical mapping. Pragmatically, they serve as dynamic, context-dependent tools that minimize communicative noise, amplify stylistic expressiveness, and encode specific emotional stances. By bridging structural rigidity with situational adaptability, phraseological units remain indispensable for natural and fluent language production.

Consequently, mastering these fixed expressions is vital for advanced language acquisition, translation theory, and cross-cultural communication. Phraseological units are dynamic elements of the Uzbek language that encapsulate historical events, cultural traditions, and linguistic evolution. Their meanings and structures have been shaped by centuries of social, political, and technological transformations. Understanding the evolution of these expressions provides valuable insights into how language reflects and adapts to changing human experiences. As globalization and digital communication continue to influence language, new phraseological units will emerge, further enriching the linguistic landscape of Uzbek language

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