

THE CONCEPT OF “HONOR” AND “SHAME” IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS: A COGNITIVE-LINGUOCULTURAL APPROACH

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Abstract. *This article examines how the moral-emotional pair HONOR and SHAME is conceptualized and linguistically packaged in English and Uzbek phraseological units. Working within a cognitive-linguocultural perspective, the study treats idioms and fixed expressions as “compressed” cultural knowledge: they preserve shared evaluations, social scripts, and embodied imagery through which speakers recognize what counts as honorable conduct and what triggers shame. A qualitative contrastive analysis of phraseological material (dictionary sources and curated discourse examples) shows that English phraseology tends to foreground individual reputation, personal integrity, and public face management, while Uzbek phraseology more consistently encodes collective evaluation, social surveillance, and honor as a relational value tied to family/community. Across both languages, recurring conceptual mechanisms include spatial and weight metaphors (falling, lowering, carrying), somatic imagery (face, head, heart), and scenario-like constructions that present shame as exposure and honor as maintained standing. The findings support the view that phraseology provides a privileged window into culturally patterned emotion concepts and helps explain persistent asymmetries in idiom equivalence and translation.*

Keywords: *cognitive phraseology, linguocultural analysis, honor, shame, English, Uzbek, idioms, conceptual metaphor, cultural scripts.*

Introduction. Honor and shame are not merely private feelings; they are social emotions that make moral order visible. In everyday interaction they regulate belonging, boundaries, and the limits of acceptable behavior, but in language they also become stabilized as reusable meanings. Phraseology is one of the clearest places where this stabilization happens. Idioms and fixed expressions let speakers evaluate actions quickly, often without explicit moral commentary, because the evaluation is already built into the unit. When a community repeatedly returns to the same figurative patterns—falling from honor, living with a stain, losing face, carrying

shame—those patterns begin to function as culturally shared shortcuts for interpreting experience.

A cognitive-linguocultural approach treats such shortcuts as evidence of conceptual structure. Instead of assuming that honor and shame are universal “labels” with identical content across languages, the approach asks how each linguistic community organizes the domain: what is treated as the central trigger of shame, who is imagined as the judge, what counts as restoring honor, and where the boundary lies between shame, embarrassment, guilt, modesty, and respect.

From the perspective of cognitive phraseology, idioms are not frozen ornaments but motivated form-meaning pairings anchored in conceptual metaphor, metonymy, and culturally salient scenarios. Recent corpus-based work within cognitive phraseology frameworks demonstrates how idiomatic domains (even those that look “purely cultural,” such as marriage traditions) can be systematically analyzed through conceptual motivations and discourse evidence. This methodological orientation is particularly productive for honor and shame because these concepts are strongly evaluative and scenario-based: they are experienced and narrated through typical sequences (insult → exposure → reaction; or achievement → recognition → maintained standing), and phraseology frequently encodes those sequences in compact form.

Methods. The study uses a qualitative contrastive design guided by cognitive-linguocultural analysis. The dataset consists of phraseological units and stable evaluative expressions drawn from reputable lexicographic resources (major English idiom dictionaries and Uzbek phraseological dictionaries) complemented by illustrative discourse contexts where the units occur naturally. The selection criterion was semantic relevance to the conceptual field of honor/shame, including near-synonymous Uzbek lexemes and cultural keywords associated with the domain (e.g., or, nomus, uyat, sharm, sha'n) and English items such as honor, shame, disgrace, lose face, save face, dishonor, as well as fixed expressions that encode these meanings without naming them directly.

Analytically, each unit was examined on three levels. First, its conceptual motivation was identified: whether the idiom is structured by spatial metaphors (UP/DOWN, IN/OUT), weight metaphors (BURDEN), contamination metaphors (STAIN), visibility metaphors (EXPOSURE), or somatic metonymy (FACE/HEAD/HEART as loci of social self). Second, the unit was mapped to a cultural scenario: who judges, what triggers evaluation, what counts as repair, and whether the social frame is individualistic or collective. Third, potential translation relations were assessed: direct equivalence, partial overlap, or non-equivalence requiring explanation or substitution.

The cognitive-phraseological framing follows the integration of phraseology with cognitive linguistics emphasized in recent scholarship, where idioms are analyzed as

motivated constructions rather than arbitrary exceptions. The linguocultural dimension relies on the premise that emotion concepts are culturally patterned and that languages provide different “ready-made” pathways for expressing and managing shame and honor. A relevant recent discussion of shame as culturally mediated and socially consequential is provided in applied ethnolinguistic work that treats shame as a barrier shaped by communicative norms and cultural values.

Results. The English and Uzbek materials show both shared conceptual mechanisms and consistent divergences in how honor and shame are “made thinkable” through phraseology.

Across both languages, a prominent shared pattern is the spatialization of moral standing. Honor is treated as a position that can be maintained (standing, keeping one’s head up), while shame is linked to downward movement, collapse, or reduced verticality. English idioms commonly phrase this as loss of standing or public disgrace; Uzbek expressions likewise use imagery of lowering, bowing, or being unable to “raise the head” as a social sign of shame. In both languages, the metaphor does not simply decorate meaning; it organizes the evaluation: shame pulls the person down; honor keeps the person “up.” This shared pattern produces partial translational overlap, but the pragmatic center differs: English often frames the effect as damage to personal reputation, while Uzbek more readily frames it as damage visible to the group and therefore extended to relational networks.

A second shared tendency is the materialization of shame as a substance that can be carried, stuck to the person, or difficult to remove. English phraseology uses contamination and stain logic—disgrace as a mark, shame as something that clings. Uzbek phraseology similarly encodes shame as something that can “fall onto” a person or family, or “remain” like an undesirable trace. The cognitive effect is that shame becomes quasi-physical: it is not merely a feeling but an object-like social condition.

Somatic metonymy forms a third strong bridge between the two systems. English idioms heavily mobilize the face as the social self, making expressions like lose face and save face central. Uzbek phraseology also assigns social identity to visible body parts, especially yuz (face) and bosh (head), where “face” indexes social acceptability and “head” indexes dignity and the ability to meet others’ gaze. The difference lies in scenario structure: in English, “face” often aligns with interactional politeness and public presentation; in Uzbek, the face/head imagery is more frequently tied to moral worth and communal respect, extending beyond the immediate interaction.

A fourth recurring pattern is the visibility/exposure scenario. Shame becomes a result of being seen, revealed, or judged. In English, the idiomatic field frequently points to publicity (being shamed, being disgraced), emphasizing audience and reputation. Uzbek phraseology more insistently activates the idea of “what people will say” as an ever-present evaluator, which makes shame not only an internal reaction

but also a socially anticipated event. In other words, English idioms often encode shame as a consequence of public revelation, while Uzbek idioms often encode shame as a condition managed under the continuous possibility of communal observation.

A fifth pattern concerns the moral economy of repair. In both languages, honor can be restored, but the imagined path differs. English phraseology more often implies repair through personal action (regaining respect, clearing one's name), whereas Uzbek phraseology more readily implies repair through relational realignment and communal acknowledgment (restoring family standing, returning to a state where one can "raise one's head" in front of others). This is visible in the kinds of agents implied by the idioms: English idioms frequently position the individual as the primary manager of honor; Uzbek idioms often position the individual within a relational system where family and community act as stakeholders.

Finally, the comparative analysis highlights systematic zones of non-equivalence. Some English units that revolve around interactional "face" management do not map neatly onto Uzbek because Uzbek equivalents often shift toward stronger moral coloring (from embarrassment toward shame/honor). Conversely, Uzbek cultural keywords (or/nomus) often carry a dense moral and relational load that English tends to distribute across several items (honor, dignity, reputation, modesty), forcing translation to choose which component is foregrounded. These mismatches are not accidental; they reflect different cultural scripts encoded by phraseology and become most visible in contexts involving gender expectations, family reputation, and public evaluation.

Discussion. The findings support the claim that phraseology is a privileged site for studying honor and shame as culturally organized emotion concepts. The shared conceptual mechanisms—verticality, burden, stain, face/head metonymy, exposure—suggest that human embodied experience provides a common pool of metaphorical resources. Yet the systematic differences in scenario structure indicate that cultural models select, weight, and connect those resources in distinct ways.

The English material tends to organize honor and shame around an interactional public self that must be managed under conditions of social visibility. This resonates with research lines that emphasize how emotions and their "fit" are shaped by cultural expectations and communicative environments. In such an environment, idioms like lose face and save face function not only as labels but as cultural instructions: maintain control of public presentation, avoid humiliating exposure, manage impressions. Shame, then, becomes closely aligned with reputation damage and public evaluation, and honor aligns with integrity and recognized standing.

The Uzbek material, while using similar embodied imagery, more consistently frames the domain as relational and moral: honor is not just personal prestige but a socially distributed value, and shame is not just embarrassment but a marker of moral failure under communal gaze. The phraseological system makes this visible by

repeatedly invoking scenarios where the audience is not an abstract public but a concrete community whose judgment is anticipated. This aligns with applied ethnolinguistic perspectives that treat shame as a socially consequential barrier and a culturally mediated regulator of behavior. The linguistic outcome is that Uzbek phraseology often compresses a broader script: honor is guarded in advance, shame is prevented as much as felt, and both concepts are anchored in shared norms of respectability.

From a cognitive-phraseological standpoint, the results also reinforce the idea that idioms are motivated constructions. The conceptual logic is stable enough to be analyzed systematically, and recent cognitive phraseology research demonstrates the feasibility of such systematic treatment using corpus-based evidence and conceptual mapping. What the present comparison adds is a specifically moral-emotional domain where cultural scripts are particularly salient. In honor/shame phraseology, the meaning is rarely purely descriptive; it is evaluative and normative. This makes the linguocultural dimension unavoidable: even when the same metaphor exists, the moral weight and pragmatic force may differ.

The translation implications follow directly. When English idioms foreground interactional face management, Uzbek equivalents may intensify the moral component, shifting toward stronger shame/honor meanings. When Uzbek idioms foreground family/community standing, English may require paraphrase or an idiom from a different evaluative register (reputation, dignity, disgrace) that matches only part of the script. In practical terms, equivalence must be treated as script-equivalence rather than word-equivalence: the translator needs to preserve the scenario, the implied judge, and the repair logic, not just the surface metaphor.

A further implication concerns cognitive salience. Uzbek has a dense cluster of cultural keywords for this domain (or, nomus, uyat, sharm, sha'n), which likely supports fine-grained distinctions in everyday moral talk. English distributes comparable distinctions across a different set of lexemes and idioms (honor, dignity, pride, shame, embarrassment, disgrace). The phraseological system thus reveals how each language organizes the boundary lines between shame, modesty, social anxiety, and moral condemnation. This boundary organization is precisely what a cognitive-linguocultural approach is designed to capture.

Conclusion. This study shows that English and Uzbek phraseological units provide structured, culturally saturated ways to visualize and evaluate the concepts of honor and shame. Both languages draw on embodied and spatial metaphors that treat honor as maintained standing and shame as downward movement, burden, stain, or exposure. At the same time, the two systems diverge in their dominant cultural scripts. English phraseology more strongly foregrounds the management of public self and reputation in interaction, while Uzbek phraseology more consistently frames honor

and shame as relational moral values embedded in communal judgment and family standing.

These differences explain persistent asymmetries in idiom equivalence and offer a principled basis for translation strategies: matching the underlying cultural scenario is often more important than matching a literal image. More broadly, the findings confirm that cognitive phraseology is an effective methodological lens for investigating culturally patterned emotion concepts, especially those—like honor and shame—that regulate social order through shared evaluation.

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