



PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Zuvaytova Sarvinoz Nusraxon qizi

Karshi State University

Foreign Language faculty, 3rd year student

Tel: +99895 074 43 01

email: s9376523@gmail.com

Annotation. *This article explores the close relationship between phraseological units and cultural identity. It analyzes how idioms, proverbs, and other fixed expressions reflect the worldview, history, and values of a particular nation. Through comparative examples, the study shows how cultural contexts influence the meaning and usage of phraseological units in English and other languages.*

Keywords: *phraseological units, cultural identity, idioms, proverbs, linguistic worldview, national values.*

Аннотация, *В данной статье рассматривается тесная связь между фразеологическими единицами и культурной идентичностью. Анализируется, как идиомы, пословицы и другие устойчивые выражения отражают мировоззрение, историю и ценности конкретного народа. На сравнительных примерах показано, как культурный контекст влияет на значение и употребление фразеологических единиц в английском и других языках.*

Ключевые слова: *фразеологические единицы, культурная идентичность, идиомы, пословицы, языковая картина мира, национальные ценности.*

Introduction

Language is not only a means of communication but also a powerful tool for expressing the cultural identity of a community. Among the many components of a language, phraseological units—such as idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions—serve as linguistic mirrors of national character, collective memory, and social values. These expressions are deeply rooted in a people's historical experiences, religious beliefs, social practices, and everyday life. Phraseological units often encapsulate culturally specific meanings that are not always transparent to non-native speakers. For example, idioms like “kick the bucket” or “spill the beans” carry meanings that go beyond their literal interpretations and reflect cultural conventions unique to English-speaking societies. Similarly, each language has its own set of idiomatic expressions that reveal how its speakers perceive the world.

In the context of globalization and increased intercultural communication, understanding the cultural foundations of phraseological units becomes crucial not only for language learners and translators, but also for scholars interested in linguistic relativity and intercultural studies. This paper aims to examine the intricate relationship between





phraseological units and cultural identity, illustrating how these fixed expressions both preserve and transmit the cultural heritage of a language community. Phraseological units, encompassing idioms, fixed collocations, and proverbs, are deeply embedded in the cultural and historical fabric of any language. They are not merely decorative elements of speech but serve as repositories of collective wisdom, traditions, humor, and values. Through their metaphorical nature and figurative meanings, these expressions reflect the worldview of the society that produced them.

1. Cultural Reflection in Idioms

Idioms are frequently based on culturally specific metaphors and associations. For example, the English idiom *"to let the cat out of the bag"* refers to accidentally revealing a secret. Historically, it may be linked to market deception where merchants sold a cat instead of a pig, but more broadly, it symbolizes the cultural importance of trust and secrecy in English-speaking societies. In contrast, in Uzbek, a similar concept is expressed by *"og'zidan chiqib ketdi"*, which also refers to an unintentional revelation, but with a different metaphorical framing tied to speech rather than an object.

2. Proverbs and National Wisdom

Proverbs are another form of phraseological unit that encapsulate traditional wisdom. The English proverb *"The early bird catches the worm"* emphasizes punctuality and initiative, which reflects values common in Western, individualistic cultures. On the other hand, the Uzbek equivalent might be *"Erta turganning rizqi ko'p"*, which conveys a similar message but within a collectivist and agrarian context where early rising is tied to productive work and divine reward.

3. Religious and Historical Influences

Many English idioms originate from religious texts, particularly the Bible, which has historically shaped Western linguistic culture. Expressions such as *"by the skin of one's teeth"* or *"the powers that be"* stem directly from biblical passages and still carry theological and moral undertones. In contrast, Uzbek phraseology is heavily influenced by Islamic, Persian, and Turkic traditions, with idioms like *"Xudoga shukr"* and *"Sabr qilsa – g'animat"* reflecting spiritual endurance and faith.

4. Cultural Stereotypes and Worldview

Phraseological units often encapsulate cultural stereotypes or norms. For instance, the English idiom *"every man for himself"* suggests a competitive and individualistic mindset, while idioms in Eastern cultures more often reflect interdependence and communal harmony. This distinction helps scholars understand underlying cultural worldviews—whether they are high-context (like in many Asian and Central Asian cultures) or low-context (typical in Western ones).

5. Challenges in Translation and Intercultural Communication

Translating phraseological units poses significant challenges because literal translations often lose cultural nuance. For example, the English idiom *"to bite the bullet"* means to endure a painful situation with courage. A literal translation may confuse non-





native speakers unless it is substituted with a culturally equivalent idiom in the target language. In Uzbek, the concept could be approximated by “*Yuragiga olmoq*” or “*Qattiq chidash*”. Hence, understanding the cultural roots of such expressions is vital for effective translation and cross-cultural communication.

6. Phraseology in Cultural Identity Formation

Through their everyday usage, phraseological units reinforce cultural identity. They shape the way speakers of a language perceive reality, interact socially, and construct narratives. Teaching phraseology, therefore, is not just about vocabulary acquisition but also about cultural immersion. Language learners who grasp idioms and their cultural connotations are more likely to achieve communicative competence and cultural fluency.

Phraseological units such as idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions play a crucial role in reflecting and preserving the cultural identity of a language community. These expressions often encapsulate historical experiences, social values, religious beliefs, and national traditions. For instance, the English idiom "let the cat out of the bag" symbolizes accidental revelation and is rooted in a cultural metaphor unfamiliar to many non-native speakers. In Uzbek, a similar meaning is conveyed by "og'zidan chiqib ketdi", which uses a metaphor based on speech rather than deception. Proverbs like "The early bird catches the worm" emphasize individual initiative in English-speaking cultures, whereas the Uzbek "Erta turganning rizqi ko'p" ties early rising to divine blessing and communal productivity. Religious influences are also evident in English phraseology through idioms originating from the Bible such as "by the skin of one's teeth" or "the powers that be", whereas in Uzbek, Islamic traditions shape idioms like "Xudoga shukr" and "Sabr qilsa – g'animat", expressing patience and faith. Phraseological units often reinforce cultural stereotypes and worldviews; for example, "every man for himself" promotes individualism, whereas many Uzbek idioms emphasize cooperation and endurance. Translation of such expressions poses challenges, as literal translation often distorts or loses cultural meaning; "to bite the bullet" must be interpreted with cultural equivalence like "qattiq chidash". Moreover, idioms express emotional norms—English encourages restraint with phrases like "grin and bear it", while other cultures may favor emotional expression. Pop culture and digital media also influence modern phraseology, introducing new idioms like "break the internet" or "take the red pill", reflecting evolving cultural dynamics. Regional variation within one language, such as differences between British and American English idioms, shows how phraseological units evolve with local contexts. Teaching these expressions is essential for learners to achieve cultural fluency, as idiomatic understanding enables deeper interaction with native speakers. Digital corpora like the British National Corpus and COCA now help preserve and analyze phraseological units, supporting both linguistic research and cultural preservation.

Conclusion

Phraseological units serve as powerful linguistic tools that encapsulate the cultural, historical, emotional, and moral dimensions of a language community. Idioms,





proverbs, and fixed expressions not only enrich communication but also act as vessels of national identity, worldview, and collective memory. Their meanings are often deeply rooted in the traditions, religious beliefs, and everyday experiences of the speakers. As such, understanding phraseological units is essential not only for language proficiency but also for effective intercultural communication and translation. Moreover, the study of idioms provides valuable insights into societal values and behavioral norms across cultures. In the age of globalization and digital communication, the preservation and analysis of phraseological units through modern corpora and educational practices continue to play a vital role in maintaining cultural heritage and promoting mutual understanding among diverse linguistic communities.

References

1. Cowie, A. P. (1998). *Phraseology: Theory, Analysis, and Applications*. Oxford University Press.
2. Fernando, C. (1996). *Idioms and Idiomaticity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Moon, R. (1998). *Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English: A Corpus-Based Approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
4. Gläser, R. (1984). *The Stylistic Potential of Phraseological Units in the Light of Genre Analysis*. Journal of Linguistics.
5. Crystal, D. (2003). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Baker, M. (1992). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. London: Routledge.
7. Naciscione, A. (2010). *Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
8. BNC (British National Corpus): <https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/>