



THE REFLECTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK IDIOMS

MILLIY O'ZLIKNING INGLIZ VA O'ZBEK IDIOMALARIDA AKS ETISHI

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Abstract: This article examines how national identity is reflected in English and Uzbek idioms. Idioms are treated here as a kind of cultural memory: they keep traces of a people's history, daily work, values, and ways of seeing the world. Using a qualitative comparative method, the study analyses selected idioms from both languages and groups them by theme: home and hospitality, emotion and honour, and environment and occupation. The results show that the two languages express some experiences in a similar way but differ in what they choose to emphasise. The article also considers what this means for translators and for teachers of English in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: national identity, idioms, phraseology, linguaculture, English, Uzbek, cultural codes, metaphor, comparative analysis

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada milliy o'ziga xoslikning ingliz va o'zbek idiomalarida aks etishi tahlil qilinadi. Idiomalar xalqning tarixi, kundalik mehnati, qadriyatlari va dunyoga qarashini saqlovchi madaniy xotira sifatida qaraladi. Sifat va qiyosiy usul asosida ikkala tildan tanlangan idiomalar mavzu bo'yicha, ya'ni uy va mehmondorchilik, his-tuyg'u va nomus, muhit va kasb-



hunar bo'yicha guruhlandi. Natijalar ikki tilda ayrim tajribalar o'xshash ifodalanishini, biroq nimaga urg'u berilishi jihatidan farq qilishini ko'rsatdi. Shuningdek, bu xulosalarning tarjimonlar va O'zbekistondagi ingliz tili o'qituvchilari uchun ahamiyati ko'rib chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: milliy o'ziga xoslik, idiomalar, frazeologiya, lingvomadaniyat, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili, madaniy kodlar, metafora, qiyosiy tahlil

Аннотация: В статье анализируется, как национальная идентичность отражается в английских и узбекских идиомах. Идиомы рассматриваются как своего рода культурная память: в них сохраняются следы истории народа, повседневного труда, ценностей и способов видения мира. С помощью качественного сопоставительного метода отобранные идиомы двух языков сгруппированы по темам: дом и гостеприимство, чувства и честь, среда и занятия. Результаты показывают, что некоторые переживания выражаются в двух языках сходно, но акценты расставлены по-разному. Обсуждается значение выводов для переводчиков и преподавателей английского языка в Узбекистане.

Ключевые слова: национальная идентичность, идиомы, фразеология, лингвокультурология, английский язык, узбекский язык, культурные коды, метафора, сопоставительный анализ

Introduction

A learner who meets the Uzbek expression *qo'li gul* for the first time pictures a hand made of flowers. A learner who meets the English *not my cup of tea* goes looking for the tea. Both reactions are natural, and both show the same



thing: an idiom cannot be understood from its words alone, because it carries something that belongs to the people who use it.

In general terms, an idiom is a fixed combination of words whose meaning cannot be worked out from the meanings of its parts [2; 6]. Yet idioms are not random. Gibbs argues that they are motivated by images and conceptual metaphors which speakers share [3,8], and Kövecses adds that these metaphors differ from culture to culture because people's experience differs [4,10]. Telia, working in the Russian tradition of linguaculture, goes a step further and treats phraseology as a store of a nation's values and attitudes [7,9]. Wierzbicka reaches a similar view from the study of key words [8,5]. Uzbek idioms have been described carefully in the explanatory phraseological dictionary [5,14], but a comparison with English from the cultural side is still less common.

This article asks how national identity shows up in English and Uzbek idioms, which themes the two languages share, and where they part ways. The answer matters for anyone who translates between them or teaches English to Uzbek-speaking learners.

Research Methodology

The study follows a qualitative comparative design and relies on a cultural-linguistic approach [7; 8]. About thirty idioms were chosen on purpose, roughly half from each language, all in current use and all with a visible cultural link. The English ones were checked in the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms [6,4], the Uzbek ones in the explanatory phraseological dictionary [5,14]. The set is illustrative and does not claim to cover the whole phraseology of either language.

Three steps were followed. First, the literal and the figurative meaning of each idiom were established. Second, the image behind it was identified: a sport, a sea voyage, a meal, a part of the body, a craft. Third, the idioms were grouped by theme, and each group was compared across the two languages for similarity





and difference. Because the sample is small, the conclusions are offered as tendencies, not rules.

Analysis and Results

The first theme is home, hospitality, and the family. English has *an Englishman's home is his castle*, an expression that puts privacy and ownership at the centre of domestic life. Uzbek goes the other way: *Mehmon – otangdan ulug'* (a guest is greater than your father) ranks the guest above even the head of the family, and *non-tuz hurmati* (respect for bread and salt) turns a shared meal into a moral bond. The family has its own place too. To *ona sutini oqlamoq*, literally to justify one's mother's milk, is to live up to the way one was raised, and the dictionaries consulted offered no equally direct English counterpart. A quieter habit stands behind *not my cup of tea*, which turns a personal preference into a polite refusal, something that suits a culture where tea is an everyday ritual and refusals are softened.

The second theme is emotion and honour. The English *stiff upper lip* praises self-control in the face of trouble, a quality long associated with the British, and *it's not cricket* shows that fairness is imagined through sport. Uzbek expressions place feelings in the *ko'ngil*, the heart or inner self, and speak about them more openly: *ko'ngli qolmoq* means to be hurt or disappointed, and *ko'ngli oq* describes a pure-hearted person. Honour, meanwhile, is social rather than private. A person whose *yuzi yorug'* (face is bright) has kept the family's good name, while one whose *yuzi qora* (face is black) has brought shame on it. The judge here is the community, not the individual conscience.

The third theme is environment and work. Britain is an island with a long sea tradition, and its idioms show it: *learn the ropes, in the same boat, all at sea*. A good many American idioms come from commerce and games. *Pass the buck* goes back to poker, and *keep up with the Joneses* treats social comparison as a race. Uzbek idioms draw on herding, farming, and craft. *Qo'y og'zidan cho'p*



olmagan (who has never taken a stick from a sheep's mouth) describes a gentle, harmless person, *qo'li gul* (flower-handed) praises a skilled craftsman, and *oq oltin* (white gold), the figurative name of cotton, shows how a single crop has become part of a national self-image.

There is shared ground as well. Kövecses notes that some metaphors come close to being universal because they grow from common bodily experience [4,11]. *Heart of gold* and *ko'ngli oq* are not identical, since one speaks of value and the other of purity, but both link the heart with goodness. Where the images match, translation is easy. Where they do not, a literal rendering fails, and Baker suggests replacing the idiom with one of similar meaning or, failing that, with a plain paraphrase [1,5].

Conclusion

The comparison suggests that idioms do not mirror a nation in a simple way, but they do keep a record of what a community has found worth noticing. In this sample the English idioms lean towards privacy, self-control, fair play, and the sea, while the Uzbek ones lean towards hospitality, the family, honour before others, and the land with its crafts. At the same time, both languages use the heart and the body to talk about character, and this overlap is a useful starting point for learners.

For teaching, three steps look practical. An idiom should be presented together with its image and origin, not only its translation. Learners can be asked to set it beside an Uzbek idiom on the same topic, so that they notice what each language chooses to say. And word-for-word translation of idioms should be discouraged, since it usually produces nonsense. A larger collection of idioms, and a survey of how native speakers feel about them, would show how far these tendencies hold.





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