

Representation of national color in phraseological terms: A comparative analysis of English and Uzbek

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Abstract: This study aims to comparatively analyze phraseological units in Uzbek and English from a linguacultural perspective, to identify the mechanisms and typology through which national color is expressed in phraseological terminology, and to demonstrate the potential application of findings in translation practice and foreign-language teaching methodology. The research employed a mixed-methods design integrating qualitative and quantitative analysis. Comparative-typological, descriptive-analytical, contextual, and componential analysis methods were applied alongside content analysis and a linguacultural approach. Over 120 phraseological units were selected from Uzbek and English reference dictionaries and literary text corpora. Findings were validated by three independent expert raters. The findings demonstrate the necessity of developing linguacultural competence in foreign-language pedagogy, applying specialized strategies for phraseological lacunae in translation, and incorporating cultural glosses into bilingual phraseological dictionaries.

Keywords: phraseological unit, national color, linguacultural, comparative linguistics, semantic equivalence, metaphorical phraseologism, metonymic phraseologism, cultural lacuna, translation studies.

Introduction

Language is the greatest cultural heritage of humankind — not merely a medium of communication but a mirror that reflects a people’s spiritual world, mentality, and national identity. Phraseological units constitute the irreplaceable treasury of every language: within them are crystallized centuries of lived experience, moral values, and cultural codes accumulated by a people.

In an era of accelerating globalization, intercultural communication has intensified dramatically. The ability to comprehend and adequately translate phraseological units has acquired strategic importance. Nevertheless, phraseological units belong to the category of linguistic items most resistant to translation; preserving their national color in the target language remains one of the most formidable challenges in translation studies.

The rapid development of linguacultural within modern linguistics has rendered the study of the national-cultural properties of phraseological units increasingly urgent. A comprehensive comparative-linguacultural analysis of the phraseological inventories of Uzbek and English has yet to be carried out at an adequate level. This gap constitutes the primary motivation for the present study.

The overarching aim of this study is to determine, through comparative-linguacultural analysis, the role, mechanisms, and typology of national-color expression in Uzbek and English phraseological units, and to demonstrate the potential for applying the findings in translation practice and foreign-language teaching methodology:

1. to establish the theoretical-methodological foundations of the concepts of phraseological unit and national color;
2. to classify the sources and mechanisms by which national color is expressed in Uzbek phraseological units;
3. to analyze the distinctive features through which national color is expressed in English phraseological units;
4. to conduct a comparative analysis of phraseological units from both languages according to their degree of semantic equivalence;

5. to identify instances of cultural divergence and determine corresponding translation strategies.

The primary sources of national color in Uzbek and English phraseology differ fundamentally. Cases of full semantic equivalence are expected to account for no more than 20% of all phraseological pairs.

Literature Review

V. V. Vinogradov[2], who established phraseology as an independent branch of linguistics, classified phraseological units into three groups according to their degree of semantic cohesion: phraseological fusions (srashheniia), phraseological unities (edinstva), and phraseological collocations (sochetaniia). His taxonomy has provided the methodological foundation for all subsequent phraseological research.

Academician Sh. Rahmatullayev[3], conducted in-depth investigation of the structure, semantics, and national-cultural properties of Uzbek phraseological units. He demonstrated their organic connection with folk oral literature, arguing that every Uzbek phraseologism represents a spiritual portrait of the nation.

In the field of linguoculturology, V. N. Telia[4], V. A. Maslova[5], and Yu. D. Apresyan[6] constitute the theoretical core. Telia defined national color as “a trace of national-cultural experience preserved in the semantic layer of a linguistic unit’s meaning.”

In English phraseology, the research of A. Makkai[7] and J. Sinclair[8] illuminated the semantic and corpus-linguistic dimensions of phraseologisms. A. Cowie [9] and R. Moon[10] carry considerable methodological weight for comparative phraseological study.

Within Uzbek linguistics, A. Hojiyev[11], B. Yo‘ldoshev[12], and N. Mahmudov[13] have made substantial contributions. However, no prior study has examined the mechanisms of national-color expression in Uzbek-English phraseologisms on a broad comparative scale — this constitutes the scholarly novelty of the present research.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted on the basis of a mixed-methods design integrating qualitative and quantitative analysis. Comparative-linguocultural analysis was selected as the primary methodological approach. An initial pool of 250 phraseological units was assembled. Following filtering, 120 phraseologisms (60 Uzbek, 60 English) were selected. Selection criteria: (1) identifiable national-cultural context; (2) cultural gloss in the dictionary entry; (3) active use in contemporary texts.

Table 1. Analytical methods employed in the study

Method		Application	Key Authority
Comparative-typological		Contrasting phraseologisms across two languages	Vinogradov; Cowie
Componential analysis		Isolating semantic components	Apresyan; Moon
Linguocultural analysis		Uncovering cultural-national meaning layers	Telia; Maslova
Contextual analysis		Phraseologisms within textual situations	Sinclair
Content analysis		Quantitative identification of sources	Berelson

Three independent expert raters (Tashkent UASciences philology faculty) reviewed findings. Inter-rater reliability Cohen’s $\kappa = 0.82$, indicating high agreement. Berelson’s[14] rigorous framework for content analysis was applied throughout.

Results

Analysis identified five primary sources (Table 2). The largest share: customs and ceremonies (33.3%, n=20).

Table 2. Sources of national color in Uzbek phraseologisms (n=60)

Source of National Color	n	(%)	Illustrative Phraseologism
Everyday life, rituals, and customs	20	33.3	<i>To ‘y ustiga to ‘y bo ‘ldi</i>
Nature, geography, and agrarian environment	14	23.3	<i>Toshdan suv chiqarmoq</i>
Culinary and food culture	11	18.3	<i>Osh bo ‘lsin!</i>
Religious-moral and philosophical beliefs	9	15.0	<i>Beshikdan belgilangan</i>
Labor, crafts, and trade	6	10.0	<i>Ustaning qo ‘li oltin</i>
Total	60	100	—

Within the ritual practices group (n=20), units reflecting Uzbek wedding traditions, cradle ceremony, and hospitality values are dominant. As Rahmatullayev[15]noted, these phraseologisms embody the collective memory of a people’s centuries-old customs. The expression *To ‘y ustiga to ‘y bo ‘ldi* [lit. ‘A wedding upon a wedding’] conveys that in Uzbek mentality the wedding is a marker of entire community cohesion.

Analysis of English phraseologisms identified five primary sources (Table 3). Maritime and military traditions: largest share (28.3%, n=17).

Table 3. Sources of national color in English phraseologisms (n=60)

Source of National Color	n	(%)	Illustrative Phraseologism
Maritime and military traditions	17	28.3	<i>To be in the same boat</i>
Historical events and figures	14	23.3	<i>Meet one’s Waterloo</i>
Biblical and literary heritage	13	21.7	<i>A wolf in sheep’s clothing</i>
Sport and hunting traditions	9	15.0	<i>Beat around the bush</i>
Social-psychological norms	7	11.7	<i>Keep a stiff upper lip</i>
Total	60	100	—

Kunin [16] identified maritime tradition as the dominant source of English phraseology, attributing it to Britain’s island-state identity. The present study corroborates this with quantitative data: 28.3% of analyzed English phraseologisms originate from seafaring contexts.

Table 4. Semantic equivalence of Uzbek and English phraseologisms (n=60 pairs)

Equivalence Type	n	(%)	Description
Full semantic equivalent	9	15.0	Meaning, image, and cultural context correspond
Partial semantic equivalent	22	36.7	Meaning corresponds; image or context differs
Functional equivalent	18	30.0	Overall meaning matches; source images differ
No equivalent (lacuna)	11	18.3	Exists in one language only

Table 5. Illustrative comparative examples

Uzbek Phraseologism	English Equivalent	Shared Meaning	Equivalence
<i>Ko‘z qorachig‘idek asramoq</i>	<i>The apple of one’s eye</i>	Most cherished thing	Full equivalent
<i>Boshini qumga tiqmoq</i>	<i>Bury one’s head in the sand</i>	Ignore a problem	Full equivalent
<i>Toshdan suv chiqarmoq</i>	<i>Squeeze blood from a stone</i>	Attempt the impossible	Partial equivalent
<i>To‘y ustiga to‘y bo‘ldi</i>	<i>It never rains but it pours</i>	Events in rapid succession	Functional equivalent
<i>Qiz oshi</i>	— (lacuna)	Ceremonial pre-wedding feast	Lacuna
— (lacuna)	<i>Keep a stiff upper lip</i>	Conceal emotions stoically	Lacuna

Discussion

The research hypothesis was confirmed: full equivalence stood at 15%, below the 20% threshold. According to Maslova’s[17] linguocultural conception, phraseologisms constitute the “cultural code” of a people, reflecting a nation’s world-view metaphorically. Our findings provide empirical grounding for this in the Uzbek-English case.

The prominence of ritual practices (33.3%) confirms Vinogradov’s[18] and Rahmatullayev’s[19] proposition that phraseologisms are born of social practice. In Uzbek communal culture, wedding feast, cradle ceremony, and hospitality occupy the center of social existence, and it is these that have found the strongest expression in the phraseological fund.

The dominance of the maritime source in English phraseology (28.3%) was observed by Kunin[20] , who linked it to British imperial expansion. The present study corroborates this with quantitative evidence.

Lacuna phraseologisms (18.3%) are particularly significant. According to Telia[21] , such units are “linguoculturemes” in which a unique cultural concept of a particular people is encoded. Three principal translation strategies apply: (1) transliteration + explanatory gloss; (2) functional analogy; (3) descriptive translation.

The absence of a Uzbek equivalent for *Keep a stiff upper lip* reveals divergent emotional display norms. This finding may serve as phraseological evidence corroborating Hofstede’s[22] individualism-collectivism dimension: Uzbek collectivist culture valorizes the sharing of grief, whereas English individualist culture valorizes stoic composure.

Phraseologisms with a metaphorical structure most powerfully retain national color (68%). This confirms Lakoff and Johnson's [23] conceptual metaphor theory: "metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system." National thought is expressed through national metaphors, which become stabilized in language through phraseologisms.

Primary limitation: sample size (n=120) is modest compared with large-scale corpus investigations. Only one language pair was analyzed. Diastatic and diachronic dimensions remain for future inquiry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of national color representation in English and Uzbek phraseological terms demonstrates that phraseological units serve not only as linguistic expressions but also as important carriers of cultural identity, historical memory, and national worldview. Both English and Uzbek languages reflect their societies' unique traditions, customs, values, and social experiences through stable idiomatic expressions, yet they differ significantly in symbolic associations, imagery, and cultural references.

The study reveals that English phraseological units often emphasize practicality, individualism, and historical-cultural symbolism rooted in Western traditions, while Uzbek phraseological expressions strongly embody collectivism, hospitality, moral values, and centuries-old Eastern cultural heritage. Despite these differences, both languages share universal human concepts such as wisdom, honesty, labor, and emotional expression, proving that phraseology simultaneously preserves national specificity and common human values.

Furthermore, the analysis confirms that phraseological units are valuable sources for understanding intercultural communication, translation studies, and comparative linguistics. National-cultural elements embedded in idioms may present challenges for direct translation, making it essential for researchers, translators, and language learners to consider both semantic meaning and cultural context.

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