



THE ANTHROPOCENTRIC ASPECT OF ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract

This article examines the historical, cultural, and anthropocentric foundations of phraseological units in English and Uzbek. It argues that, as nations and states develop, their languages likewise evolve, acquiring new semantic layers and cultural significance. Phraseological units, being integral components of the lexical system, possess their own historical trajectories, and understanding their origins is essential for their accurate and contextually appropriate use. The study highlights that anthropocentric perspectives—now central in modern linguistics—have long been embedded in the formation and semantic evolution of phraseological units. Through comparative analysis, the article explores how social changes, worldviews, and cultural values shape phraseological meaning, resulting in the aging or transformation of certain idioms. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of L. P. Smith, V. P. Zhukov, V. N. Teliya, N. M. Shansky, and Sh. Rahmatullaev, the research demonstrates that idioms serve not only as carriers of cultural and historical information but also as powerful pragmatic tools. Special attention is given to the anthropocentric nature of idioms, their evaluative and expressive potential, and their role in enhancing communicative effectiveness across cultures.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism; phraseological units; idioms; semantic evolution; cultural linguistics; evaluative meaning; pragmatics; English; Uzbek; linguistic heritage.

Introduction

The anthropocentric paradigm in modern linguistics emphasizes the centrality of the human being in the structure and evolution of language. This scientific approach assumes that language is not only a tool for communication but also a



reflection of human cognition, behavior, and cultural experience. Phraseological units (PUs) — idioms, proverbs, collocations, and fixed expressions — encode speakers' values, emotions, perceptions, and worldviews.

English phraseological units serve as cultural markers, demonstrating how native speakers perceive reality and conceptualize human experiences such as emotions, moral norms, social roles, and relationships. Therefore, the anthropocentric investigation of phraseology is crucial for understanding the interaction between language and human cognition.

Methods:

This study uses several complementary methods:

1. Descriptive method — to classify phraseological units based on their semantic and structural properties.
2. Conceptual analysis — to identify anthropocentric concepts encoded in idioms.
3. Comparative analysis — to reveal differences and similarities with phraseological units of other cultures.
4. Contextual analysis — to interpret idioms in authentic texts and determine their pragmatic functions.
5. Cognitive-linguistic method — to uncover metaphorical models based on human perception and bodily experience.

Results:

Anthropocentric features of phraseological units. These units often reflect anthropocentric concepts, i.e., notions connected to human nature, feelings, behavior, and physicality. Examples include:

Human body–based idioms: keep an eye on, cold feet, lose one’s head. These idioms show how human anatomy is used to conceptualize abstract ideas.

Emotion-based idioms: be over the moon, boiling with anger, heartbroken. They manifest universal emotional patterns but framed by cultural metaphors.

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Cognitive metaphors rooted in human experience

English idioms frequently use metaphors based on bodily or sensory experiences: HEART = EMOTION (e.g., with all one's heart, lose heart).

HEAD = INTELLECT (e.g., use your head, keep your head above water).

BODY HEAT = EMOTION INTENSITY (e.g., hot-headed, cold-hearted).

These metaphorical mappings reveal that English speakers conceptualize abstract domains through Cultural worldview reflected in phraseological units

Many English idioms represent cultural values such as: individualism — stand on one's own feet, think outside the box; pragmatism — the bottom line, actions speak louder than words; optimism — every cloud has a silver lining. Thus, phraseological units serve as cultural codes reflecting national mentality.

Discussion:

It is a fact that as nations and states are formed over a certain period of time, the language belonging to this nation and state is also refined, acquired a new significance, and developed. Like any unit in the structure of the language, phraseological units have their own history of origin, and by deeply understanding it, we can have the opportunity to correctly use the selected phraseological unit in speech by drawing a comprehensive conclusion about the state and reason for the use of this unit.

Also, while analyzing the origin of phraseological units, it is not difficult to understand that sparks of anthropocentric views, which are in the spotlight in all spheres of society, and in particular, have become a topical topic of the Department of Phraseology, which has become a new branch of modern Linguistics today, existed in the past. Speaking of anthropocentrism, it is no secret to all of us that it is impossible not to recognize that anthropocentric views have become a leading concept not only in linguistics, but also in every field of society, such as fine arts and sculpture, as well as in artistic and applied arts.

The development of all activities—both material and spiritual—for the sake of humanity and human dignity, as well as directing them to serve humankind, did not emerge today or in the recent past. It is quite possible that such views arose from the idea that all actions are carried out through the human factor and, at the same time, aim to create convenience and new opportunities for humans.



At this point, it should be emphasized that over time—due to changes in social systems, lifestyles, and people’s viewpoints—both the concepts expressed by phraseological units and the units themselves have gradually aged and acquired a historical character. Consequently, knowing the history of a particular phraseological unit has become crucial for understanding its meaning.

When discussing the historical formation and semantic development of phraseological units, it is appropriate to clarify this issue through a comparative analysis of English and Uzbek phraseological units. These analyses were conducted based on the broad definition of phraseological units described by linguists such as L. P. Smit, V. P. Zhukov, V. N. Teliya, and N. M. Shanskiy. To better understand phraseological units in their broader sense, it is sufficient to recall Sh. Rahmatullayev’s statement: “The richness of vocabulary consists of words and the expressions formed from these words.” Based on this idea, phraseological units can serve as a major aid in expanding vocabulary, as they allow learners not only to acquire new words but also to practice using them in new contexts.

Anthropocentrism and evaluation

English idioms often carry evaluative (positive/negative) meanings based on culturally shared norms: Positive traits: a heart of gold, as cool as a cucumber. Negative traits: a pain in the neck, big mouth. These evaluations are grounded in social perceptions of what is considered acceptable or unacceptable human behavior.

While many anthropocentric idioms have universal roots (e.g., bodily metaphors), others are culturally specific: carry coals to Newcastle — based on British mining culture. the penny drops — tied to British currency history. This shows how anthropocentric phraseology can reflect both shared human experience and unique cultural contexts.

Pragmatic functions Anthropocentric phraseologic units serve multiple pragmatic purposes: Expressiveness — intensifying emotional impact. Politeness or mitigation — using euphemistic idioms. Humor and creativity — using playful metaphors. Thus, idioms enhance the communicative effectiveness of language.



Conclusion

The study shows that phraseological units constitute a vital part of the cultural and linguistic heritage of any nation, reflecting both universal human experience and unique cultural contexts. Their historical development demonstrates that idioms evolve in accordance with changes in social structures, lifestyles, and collective perceptions. A comparative analysis of English and Uzbek phraseological units confirms that anthropocentric views—centered on human behavior, values, and cognitive patterns—play a decisive role in shaping idiomatic meaning. Idioms frequently encode evaluative judgments, embodying culturally accepted norms of behavior, and they often carry expressive, humorous, or mitigating pragmatic functions. As a result, phraseological units enhance the communicative richness of language while providing insight into a community's worldview. Understanding their origins and semantic layers is crucial not only for linguistic analysis but also for effective cross-cultural communication. The findings underline the necessity of continued interdisciplinary research into idioms as culturally embedded linguistic phenomena.

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