

THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS IN THE STUDY OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract. This article highlights the role of cognitive linguistics in the study of phraseological units in English and Uzbek. It examines the key concepts of cognitive phraseology, including the importance of categories such as concept, conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy, frame, and gestalt in the analysis of phraseological units. It also analyzes the relationship between phraseology and cognitive linguistics, the connection of phraseological units with human thinking, the conceptual system, and the national-cultural worldview.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, phraseological unit, concept, conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy, frame, gestalt

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada kognitiv tilshunoslikning ingliz va o'zbek tillaridagi frazeologik birliklarni o'rganishdagi o'rni yoritiladi. Unda kognitiv frazeologiyaning asosiy tushunchalari, jumladan, konsept, konseptual metafora, konseptual metonimiya, freym va geshtalt kabi kategoriyalarning frazeologik birliklar tahlilidagi ahamiyati ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, frazeologiya va kognitiv tilshunoslikning o'zaro aloqasi, frazeologik birliklarning inson tafakkuri, konseptual tizimi hamda milliy-madaniy dunyoqarash bilan bog'liqligi tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: kognitiv tilshunoslik, frazeologik birlik, konsept, konseptual metafora, konseptual metonimiya, freym, geshtalt

Аннотация. В данной статье освещается роль когнитивной лингвистики в изучении фразеологизмов в английском и узбекском языках. В ней рассматриваются основные понятия когнитивной фразеологии, в том числе значение таких категорий, как концепт, концептуальная метафора, концептуальная метонимия, фрейм и гештальт в анализе фразеологических единиц. Также анализируется взаимосвязь фразеологии и когнитивной лингвистики, связь фразеологических единиц с человеческим мышлением, концептуальной системой и национально-культурным мировоззрением.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная лингвистика, фразеологическая единица, концепт, концептуальная метафора, концептуальная метонимия, фрейм, гештальт

The study of the cognitive properties of phraseological units is one of the leading directions in modern linguistics, and the volume of research in this area continues to grow steadily. This is due to the fact that cognitive phraseology still encompasses a number of issues requiring further investigation: mechanisms of imagery formation, the correlation between universal and national-specific elements in idiomatic systems, the role of human bodily experience in motivating phraseological meaning, among others. Studying phraseological units from a cognitive perspective makes a significant contribution not only to linguistics but also to related fields—cognitive psychology, linguaculturology, and translation theory—as phraseology most vividly demonstrates the interplay among language, thought, and culture.

There are several core concepts that explain the cognitive properties of phraseological units: *concept*, *conceptual metaphor and metonymy*, *frame*, and *gestalt*. Before unpacking the link between phraseological units and cognitive linguistics, it is essential to answer what cognitive linguistics itself represents. In *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*, it is defined as follows:

“Cognitive linguistics is the enterprise of cognitive science dedicated to describing and explaining the mental structures and processes associated with linguistic knowledge. Cognitive linguistics is not a single, unified theory, but rather a flexible framework encompassing various theories of language” [1. 2013: p. 14].

The main objective of cognitive linguistics is the study of mental processes taking place in the human mind in connection with linguistic activity [2. 2006: p. 53].

The importance of the cognitive approach in phraseology lies in the fact that phraseological units, as products of human thought, reflect the processes of perception, categorization, and conceptualization of reality. They serve not only as a means of figurative expression of thought, but also as units that code the cultural experience, worldview, and knowledge system of a society in linguistic form. According to the cognitive approach, phraseological units form in the human mind as a result of conceptualization and mental

modeling processes that facilitate the expression of knowledge, experience, and perceptions of the world through language.

Cognitive linguistics emerged as an independent discipline in the early 1970s. Its emergence was closely linked to a growing interest in studying the processes of categorization, conceptualization, and processing of knowledge in human thought, as well as scientific views shaped by preceding linguistic and psychological research. Initial studies in this domain were conducted by a relatively small group of scholars throughout the 1970s and 1980s. However, by the early 1990s, scientific interest expanded significantly. As a result, in 1989–1990, the International Cognitive Linguistics Association (ICLA) was founded, and the international journal “Cognitive Linguistics” began publication. These events marked a crucial milestone in establishing cognitive linguistics as an autonomous scientific field.

Cognitive linguist Ronald Langacker noted that this development signified: “...the emergence of cognitive linguistics as a distinct intellectual movement with a broad research base and self-awareness” [3. 2002: p. 7].

Scholars in cognitive linguistics examine the systemic structure and functions of language, as well as the patterns of their manifestation. However, language itself is not treated as the ultimate end of investigation. Under this framework, language is a product of human cognition, perception, and conceptualizing mental activity, as well as the primary tool for their expression. Therefore, the study of language is recognized as a vital gateway to understanding human cognitive activity [4. 1998: p. 14].

S. Askoldov emphasized that language serves as a reflection of human cognitive activity, providing insight into the nature of thought, ideas, and their organization. According to the scholar, the main feature setting cognitive linguistics apart from other linguistic movements is that it interprets language as a system reflecting fundamental properties of human consciousness and cognitive mechanisms. Thus, cognitive linguistics studies language as a phenomenon inextricably bound to human cognitive capacities and treats it as a primary vehicle for expressing human cognitive endeavor [5. 1997: p. 14].

A “concept” is one of the main term of cognitive linguistics. It represents a basic unit of human knowledge and experience about the world stored in linguistic form. In phraseology, a concept acts as a condensed hub of cultural information around which the meaning of a fixed expression condenses.

According to the theory developed by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, conceptual metaphor is not merely a stylistic trope, but a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which one conceptual domain (the target domain) is understood in terms of another, more concrete, and bodily experienced domain (the source domain) [6. 1980.]. Conceptual metaphor forms the foundation of a substantial portion of idiomatic language.

For example, the English idiom “to lose one’s head” and the Uzbek “esini yo‘qotmoq/boshini yo‘qotmoq” (to lose one’s mind/head) are built upon the shared metaphorical model “human is a container for the mind”, where losing control over one’s emotions is conceptualized as physically losing the body part responsible for rational thought.

Unlike metaphor, metonymy is not based on similarity across domains, but rather on contiguity within a single conceptual domain. In phraseology, metonymic transfer is often realized via the models “part for the whole” or “organ for function.” Thus, English “keep an eye on somebody” and Uzbek “ko‘z-quloq bo‘lib turmoq” (not letting out of one’s sight) rely on the metonymy “organ of sight for the function of observation”; English “to give a hand” and Uzbek “qo‘l uzatmoq/yordam bermoq” rely on “body part for the action of assistance”.

The following category is called “frame”. The concept of a frame, introduced into scientific discourse by Ch. Fillmore, denotes a structured schema of knowledge regarding a typical scenario that underlies the meaning of a linguistic unit [7. 1982: pp. 111–117]. A phraseological unit does not activate an isolated definition, but rather an entire frame encompassing participants, roles, and conventional circumstances. For example, the idiom “to break the ice” activates the “social acquaintance” frame with elements such as “tension,” “first step,” and “overcoming barriers,” while its Uzbek counterpart “muloqotni boshlamoq/gap boshlamoq” (to initiate conversation) activates a close yet distinct frame where emphasis shifts toward speech etiquette and traditional Eastern hospitality.

A gestalt as a cognitive structure represents a holistic, non-decomposable image of a situation whose overall meaning cannot be reduced to the sum of its individual components. It is precisely the gestalt nature of perception that accounts for the idiomatic character of set expressions: the meaning of “kick the bucket” or the Uzbek “ko‘z yummoq” cannot be derived by simply combining the meanings of the constituent words—it arises as an integrated image anchored in the collective linguistic consciousness of a culture.

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that cognitive linguistics opens up new avenues for examining phraseological units, enabling researchers to move beyond purely structural and semantic descriptions of idiomatic systems. Analyzing idioms through concepts such as concept, conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy, frame, and gestalt makes it possible to explain not only “what” a given phraseological unit means, but “why” it bears that specific meaning—thereby uncovering the deep cognitive mechanisms underlying phraseological meaning formation.

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek phraseology confirms that despite their genetic and typological distance, a significant portion of their idiomatic repertoires relies on shared, universal cognitive models rooted in human bodily experience. At the same time, the national-specific dimension of phraseology remains a valuable source of insights into a people's culture, history, and worldview. Further exploration of this topic holds strong potential both for advancing cognitive phraseology theory and for practical applications in lexicography, translation, and language pedagogy.

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