

PHRASEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF YOUTH AND OLD AGE: A CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

Khamrakulova Sabina Feyruzkhonovna

Researcher of Fergana State University

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Abstract: The present study aims to examine the phraseological representations of youth and old age in English and Uzbek, revealing the cultural, semantic, and metaphorical layers embedded within idiomatic expressions related to human age. Through a comparative linguistic approach, the research identifies shared and distinct patterns of how youth and old age are conceptualized, metaphorized, and evaluated in the two languages. Findings demonstrate that while both languages utilize metaphor and evaluation to categorize human life stages, cultural attitudes significantly influence the formation and usage of age-related idioms. This article contributes to cross-cultural phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication studies.

Keywords: phraseology, youth, old age, idioms, metaphor, cultural perception, English, Uzbek, cross-linguistic analysis, age-related expressions.

Introduction

Language serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a cultural and cognitive repository, reflecting how societies perceive fundamental concepts such as age, youth, and aging. Among the many linguistic tools available, **phraseological units** (PUs) — fixed or semi-fixed expressions like idioms and proverbs — play a critical role in encoding and transmitting such perceptions. They often carry metaphorical meanings, emotional attitudes, and cultural evaluations that go beyond the literal meaning of their components.

This research explores how the stages of **youth** and **old age** are represented in the phraseological systems of **English** and **Uzbek**. These two languages, while structurally and culturally different, both have rich phraseological traditions reflecting societal attitudes toward human aging. The study provides a comparative analysis of idioms and phraseological units relating to youth and old age, focusing on metaphorical mapping, semantic structures, cultural specificity, and evaluative connotations.

Methods

2.1 Research Design

The study adopts a **qualitative-comparative linguistic** approach, rooted in cognitive linguistics and cultural semantics. The methodology includes

corpus-based analysis and comparative semantic evaluation of idioms expressing human age.

2.2 Data Collection

Idiomatic expressions were collected from:

- **English sources:**

- Oxford Dictionary of Idioms
- Cambridge Idioms Dictionary
- British National Corpus (BNC)

- **Uzbek sources:**

- O'zbek tilining frazeologik lug'ati (S.S. Sodiqov)
- Adabiy manbalar va matnlar korpusi
- O'zbek maqollari va hikmatli so'zlar to'plami

A total of **50 idioms from each language** were selected for analysis: 25 related to *youth* and 25 related to *old age*.

2.3 Analytical Framework

Phraseological units were analyzed according to:

- **Metaphorical base** (source domains)
- **Cultural-symbolic values**
- **Evaluative connotations** (positive, neutral, negative)
- **Lexical structure**
- **Pragmatic function** in context

Comparative tables were used to categorize expressions and identify patterns and divergences between the languages

3. Results

3.1 Phraseological Representations of Youth

English Examples

Idiom	Literal Meaning	Connotation
Wet behind the ears	Inexperienced	Negative
Greenhorn	New or naive person	Mildly negative
Spring chicken	Young person	Neutral (often ironic)
Bright young thing	Energetic, attractive young person	Positive

Uzbek Examples

Idiom	Literal Translation	Connotation
<i>Yangi o'rgangan qarg'a</i>	<i>A newly trained crow</i>	<i>Negative</i>
<i>Yosh yurak</i>	<i>Young heart</i>	<i>Positive</i>
<i>Qanoti chiqqan bola</i>	<i>A child who has grown wings</i>	<i>Positive</i>
<i>Yosh chaman</i>	<i>Youthful flower garden</i>	<i>Highly positive, poetic</i>

Key observation:

- English idioms about youth often emphasize **inexperience**, immaturity, or *potential*.
- Uzbek idioms more frequently highlight **energy**, **emotional warmth**, and **hope for the future**.

3.2 Phraseological Representations of Old Age

English Examples

Idiom	Literal Meaning	Connotation
<i>Over the hill</i>	Past one's prime	Negative
<i>Long in the tooth</i>	Very old	Humorous
<i>Silver surfer</i>	Old person who uses the internet	Positive
<i>Old as the hills</i>	Very old	Neutral-humorous

Uzbek Examples

Idiom	Literal Translation	Connotation
<i>Ko'pni ko'rgan</i>	One who has seen much	Positive
<i>Oqsoqol</i>	White-bearded elder	Respectful
<i>Chol bo'lsa ham charos</i>	Though old, still sharp	Positive with humor
<i>Choynakday chayqalmoq</i>	To wobble like a teapot	Negative (frailty)

Key observation:

- English idioms show a **dual attitude**: both humorous and critical.
- Uzbek idioms tend to show **reverence**, portraying the elderly as wise, experienced, and deserving of respect.

3.3 Metaphorical and Cultural Mapping

Concept	English Metaphors	Uzbek Metaphors
Youth	Spring, green, birth, animal traits (chickens, colts)	Wings, flowers, early life, warmth
Old Age	Hills, teeth, time, loss of vitality	Beards, vision, journey, pottery (e.g., teapots)

The **cultural schema** underlying each idiom reflects differing **cultural attitudes**:

- English-speaking cultures may value *youthfulness* but show *mild ageism* in language.
- Uzbek culture emphasizes **collective respect** for elders, with idioms rooted in rural and traditional imagery.

Discussion

4.1 Semantic Fields and Evaluative Meaning



In both languages, youth is semantically linked to **growth, newness, and inexperience**. However, while English idioms often focus on the naïveté of youth, Uzbek idioms tend to idealize youth's **emotional richness and dynamism**.

Old age in English is frequently metaphorized as **decline**, but also sometimes as **experience** and even **adaptability** (e.g., *silver surfer*). In Uzbek, old age is closely tied to **honor, legacy, and community status**.

4.2 Pragmatic Use in Discourse

Phraseological units are actively used in **narrative, descriptive, and evaluative** discourse:

- In English literature, idioms about age often serve a **comic or ironic** function.
- In Uzbek proverbs and storytelling, they serve **didactic and respectful** purposes.

This reflects broader **sociolinguistic norms**: humor vs. honor, individualism vs. collectivism.

4.3 Implications for Translation and Intercultural Competence

Literal translation of idioms can **distort** intended meaning. For instance, “*over the hill*” translated literally into Uzbek would lack semantic resonance and might cause misunderstanding. Cultural translation must consider **conceptual metaphors, evaluative connotation, and stylistic tone**.

Conclusion

The phraseological representations of youth and old age in English and Uzbek offer a revealing glimpse into the cognitive, cultural, and social frameworks of each language community. While both languages use metaphor and evaluation to categorize life stages, the **cultural filters** through which these expressions are formed differ significantly.

English idioms exhibit **ambivalence**, mixing respect, humor, and criticism. Uzbek idioms show **coherence**, marked by respect and poetic idealization, especially toward old age. Such comparative studies are valuable for **intercultural communication, translation studies, and cultural linguistics**.

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