

Contrastive and Linguocultural Analysis of Phraseological Units with Melon Crop and Fruit-Vegetable Components (On the Example of German And Uzbek Languages)

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Abstract: This article is devoted to a contrastive analysis of vegetable-garden and fruit-vegetable component-based phraseological units, which constitute important elements of the flora concept in both German and Uzbek languages. The study examines the position of this thematic group within the phraseological systems of the two languages, as well as their semantic scope and their relationship with the mentality of the respective peoples. The research demonstrates that, in German and Uzbek languages belonging to different language families, phraseological units containing floral components exhibit both distinctive features and certain commonalities, which are reflected in this article.

Keywords: Phraseology, phraseological unit, equivalence, full equivalence, linguoculturology, fruit component, vegetable-garden component, vegetable component, commonality, metaphor, euphemism, agrarian culture.

Introduction: Stable phraseological units containing names of melon crops (such as melon, watermelon, pumpkin, etc.) and fruit-vegetable items (such as apple, grape, cherry, apricot, peach, potato, carrot, onion) are widely attested and are characterized not by a purely nominative function, but by a figurative and metaphorical nature. Such units reflect the agrarian experience, aesthetic perceptions, and moral values of the people, thereby serving as significant linguistic markers of cultural worldview.

MAIN PART AND RESULTS

1. Phraseological Units Based on Melon Crops

In the Uzbek language, phraseological units associated with melon crops such as melon, watermelon, and pumpkin are highly productive. This phenomenon can be explained by the historically agrarian nature of Uzbek culture. Expressions such as *tarvuzi qo'ltig'idan tushdi* ("his watermelon fell from his armpit" – to become disappointed), *qovun tushurdi* ("to drop a melon" – to make a mistake and find oneself in an

embarrassing situation), and *qovoq kalla* ("pumpkin head" – a foolish person) are widely used.

The idiom *tarvuzi qo'ltig'idan tushdi* is regarded as a "visiting card" of the Uzbek phraseological system. It vividly demonstrates the richness of Uzbek agrarian-cultural thinking and reflects a person's psychological state of disappointment, emotional breakdown, shattered hopes, or inability to achieve expected results [5, p. 178]. The conceptual basis of this expression is rooted in the traditional rural lifestyle of Uzbek people. In Uzbekistan, watermelon is considered one of the largest, heaviest, and most valuable melon crops. Carrying it under the arm requires considerable effort and care. When a person firmly relies on something, it is metaphorically "held under the arm." If the watermelon falls, it not only drops but also breaks, becoming irreparable. Thus, the conceptual mapping can be represented as: Watermelon (major hope/goal) → Holding under the arm (effort/trust) → Falling (failure).

In German, there is no direct equivalent involving

“watermelon,” as this crop does not occupy a central position in the agrarian culture. However, semantically comparable expressions include *Jemandem fallen alle Felle weg* (“all hopes collapse for someone”) and *den Kopf hängen lassen* (“to hang one’s head,” i.e., to experience emotional distress).

In Uzbek phraseology, melon crops—particularly the watermelon component—function as a key indicator for evaluating an individual’s psychological and social state. The expression *tarvuzi qo’ltig’idan tushdi* is grounded in the agrarian notion that “the largest harvest equals the greatest hope.” In German, such states are more often expressed through body-part metaphors (e.g., *Kopf* “head”) or abstract conceptualization, which demonstrates the dominance of agrarian imagery in Uzbek nominative and metaphorical systems.

The idiom *qovun tushurdi* denotes socially inappropriate behavior, the unexpected utterance of an improper remark, or entering an embarrassing situation due to a mistake [5, p. 159]. It can be interpreted as a combination of “error,” “social discomfort,” and “shame.” In traditional Uzbek melon farming culture, melon is considered a delicate and valuable crop requiring careful handling. If a melon is dropped, it cracks and becomes unusable, symbolizing wastefulness and carelessness.

According to V. V. Vinogradov’s classification, this expression is a phraseological unit whose figurative meaning (making a mistake) is logically connected with its literal image (dropping a melon). The image of a cracked melon naturally evokes the idea of embarrassment or failure.

In German culture, similar meanings are expressed not through fruit metaphors but through everyday objects or animals, for example: *ins Fettnäpfchen treten* (“to step into a grease pot,” i.e., to make an awkward or offensive mistake) and *einen Bock schießen* (“to shoot a buck,” i.e., to commit a serious error).

It is evident that the “watermelon” idiom primarily reflects an individual’s internal psychological state, whereas the “melon” idiom evaluates external social behavior and interpersonal relations.

The expression *qovoq kalla* (“pumpkin head”) is one of the oldest and most widespread flora-based metaphors used to evaluate intellectual capacity. It exists in both Uzbek and German linguistic traditions in nearly equivalent conceptual models, making it particularly significant for comparative analysis. This idiom denotes intellectual deficiency, lack of understanding, or ignorance in an ironic or derogatory manner [5, p. 161].

The pumpkin, as a large melon crop, is characterized by

an empty or seed-filled interior. The human skull is metaphorically compared to a pumpkin in terms of shape. If the pumpkin is empty, it symbolizes the absence of “brain,” i.e., intellectual capacity. This conceptual structure can be represented as: Head (container) - Brain (content); Pumpkin head - empty container.

According to V. V. Vinogradov’s classification, this unit is considered a phraseological combination, as the word head retains its literal meaning, while pumpkin acquires a metaphorical connotation of “emptiness” or “foolishness.”

In German, similar equivalents include *hohler Kürbis* (“hollow pumpkin”) and *Kürbiskopf* (“pumpkin head”), both conveying the same semantic meaning [2, p. 445]. Thus, *qovoq kalla* demonstrates universality across both Uzbek and German phraseological systems. In both cultures, the physical structure of the pumpkin (its hollow interior) serves as a cognitive model for evaluating intellectual capacity, representing a clear manifestation of the conceptual metaphor “MIND IS A CONTAINER.”

2. Fruit-Component Phraseological Units

In German culture, the component *Apfel* (“apple”) occupies a central position and expresses not only notions of lineage continuity but also concepts such as distance and density [1; 2]. For instance, the expression *einen Apfelwurf entfernt* (“an apple’s throw away”) reflects the human cognitive tendency to measure spatial distance through bodily and experiential perception. In contrast, in Uzbek, phraseological units predominantly involve melon crops (watermelon, melon), which is explained by the historically agrarian lifestyle and national mentality of the people [4; 5]. In fruit-based units, the “fruit” image often represents a person’s psychological or social state, meaning that the condition of the fruit metaphorically mirrors the condition of the individual. Below, the semantic field of the apple (*Apfel*) component is considered.

Lineage continuity: *Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm* – “An apple does not fall far from the tree.”

Low cost: *Für einen Apfel und ein Ei* – extremely cheap, almost free.

Obligation and endurance: *In den sauren Apfel beißen* – to endure hardship or reluctantly accept something unpleasant.

Distance: *Einen Apfelwurf entfernt* – within arm’s reach, very close.

Crowdedness: *Es war so voll, dass keine Äpfel zu Boden fallen konnten* – there was no space to move.

Punishment: *Jemand kommt dorthin, wo die Äpfel auf den Simsen braten* – to be sent to prison.

The Uzbek expression “Ana xolos, pishdi gilos!” (“Well, cherries are ripe!”) is a vivid colloquial idiom widely used in spoken language. It conveys surprise, irony, or dissatisfaction when an unexpected, often unpleasant situation occurs. In this expression, the component gilos (“cherry”) does not function in its literal meaning as a fruit. Instead, the phrase is based on euphony and rhyme. It combines “Ana xolos” (expressing astonishment) with “pishdi gilos” (indicating that a situation has reached an irreversible or critical point). The rapid ripening of cherries metaphorically reinforces the unexpectedness of the situation.

In Uzbek phraseology, fruit components serve not only a didactic function but also contribute to expressive and situational communication. In “pishdi gilos,” the cherry component metaphorically marks the climax of a situation with an ironic tone. A similar expression in German is “Da haben wir den Salat!” (“Now we have the salad!”), used to describe an undesirable or chaotic outcome.

The grape (Traube) component demonstrates a highly interesting semantic field in both languages. In German phraseology, it is often associated with Aesop’s fable tradition and biblical narratives. The expression Die Trauben hängen (jemandem) zu hoch (“The grapes are too high for someone”) refers to the cognitive justification of unattainable desires by devaluing them, based on Aesop’s fable “The Fox and the Grapes” [2, 766]. The concept of “sour grapes” (saure Trauben) is also widely used. In German, the Traube component typically models metaphorical structures representing the distance between desire and fulfillment.

In Uzbek oral tradition, grapes symbolize labor, outcome, and sacredness. The proverb “Uzumini yegin-u, bog’ini so’rama” emphasizes not questioning the source of a benefit, but focusing on its outcome [7, 384]. Another proverb, “Uzumini yegan bog’bonni tanir,” suggests evaluating a person through the results of their labor [5, 198].

Thus, in German phraseology, the Traube component primarily expresses subjective-psychological justification of unattained goals, whereas in Uzbek it reflects objective-social relations between labor and result [6, 1622; 5, 198].

The Granatapfel (“pomegranate”) component is one of the clearest examples illustrating the linguocultural divergence between German and Uzbek languages. In Uzbek, this fruit is associated with productivity, beauty, and internal unity: “Anordek qizarmoq” (“to become as red as a pomegranate”) describes strong emotional embarrassment or excitement, while “Bir anorga ming bemor” refers to high demand for a scarce resource [5, p. 34].

In German, however, Granatapfel is almost absent in phraseological usage, as it is considered an exotic fruit; its semantic space is largely occupied by Apfel (“apple”).

The Apricot (O’rik / Aprikose) component in Uzbek mental culture often symbolizes early ripeness, sweetness, and sometimes devaluation. The expression “O’rigidan danagi shirin” reflects family hierarchy, indicating that grandchildren are dearer than children [7, 154]. “O’rik pishsa, pishdi, pishmasa – qishdi” expresses indifference and irresponsibility toward outcomes [5, 142].

In German phraseology, Aprikose can also perform euphemistic functions. Both Uzbek and German languages employ fruit-based metaphors to express death in a softened form. The German “In die Aprikosen gehen” and the Uzbek “Qovun poyloqqa ketmoq” demonstrate functional equivalence, both metaphorically representing death as a return to nature. This reflects a shared linguistic worldview among agrarian cultures [3, 239].

In Austrian German (Österreichisches Deutsch), the term Marille (“apricot”) carries both gastronomic and phraseological significance. For example, “Jemandem eine Marille geben” refers to hitting or slapping someone unexpectedly [Österreichisches Wörterbuch, 42nd ed., p. 422], while “Eingeweichte Marille” describes a weak-willed or overly soft person [3, 238]. Thus, regional variation shows that Marille in Austrian German has a more expressive and connotative function compared to the neutral Aprikose in standard German.

The productivity of the Apricot component in Uzbek is linked to centuries-old agrarian traditions, whereas its limited use in German is explained by the dominance of other fruits such as apples and pears in the German linguistic worldview [4, 44; 2, 104].

The Peach (Shaftoli / Pfirsich) component reveals an interesting contrast. In German, “Eine Haut wie ein Pfirsich haben” (“to have skin like a peach”) symbolizes beauty and softness [2, 578]. In Uzbek, the ripe peach expresses positive aesthetic evaluation, whereas its dried form (shaftoli qoqi) conveys illness, aging, or extreme thinness [5, 202]. In German, a similar semantic model is expressed through Dörrpflaume (“dried plum”), highlighting the dependence of fruit metaphors on cultural landscapes.

Fruit components in general are based on the following conceptual metaphors: fruit as result, sour fruit as unpleasant outcome, ripe fruit as maturity, rotten fruit as decay, and dried fruit as illness, aging, or weakness.

3. Vegetable-Component Phraseological Units

Vegetable-component phraseological units in both German and Uzbek languages are characterized by a range of specific features. They reflect the agrarian culture, culinary traditions, and character traits of both peoples.

For the German people, the potato (Kartoffel) represents a fundamental source of sustenance and one of the most essential food products. Consequently, even the concept of death is euphemistically expressed through this culturally salient “national vegetable.” The expression *sich die Kartoffeln von unten ansehen/besehen* (“to look at the potatoes from below”) functions as a euphemism, used to refer to a person’s death or near-death state without explicit or harsh wording. It corresponds to Uzbek expressions such as “to pass away,” “to close one’s eyes,” or “to leave this world.” This reflects a pragmatic tendency in German linguistic culture: death is conceptualized through a spatial metaphor associated with burial, i.e., being beneath the earth, which is metaphorically linked to potato cultivation. Since agricultural life is closely connected with potato fields, the idea of “going underground” is visually and conceptually mapped onto potato roots.

In contrast, in Uzbek linguistic worldview, death is regarded as a highly serious and sacred concept. Therefore, associating death with vegetables (e.g., metaphorically “looking at carrots from below”) would appear culturally inappropriate or disrespectful. In Uzbek, death is more commonly associated with notions such as the afterlife, journey, or return to the soil. Within Uzbek phraseology, the expression “Kartoshka burun” (“potato nose”) refers to a person with a broad, rounded, and aesthetically less refined nasal shape, functioning as a descriptive metaphor for physical appearance [11].

Historically, in German agrarian culture, the carrot (Mohrrübe) was a widely consumed and simple food source. However, children secretly stealing and eating carrots from neighboring fields was perceived as a form of “pleasant adventure.” The proverb “*Gestohlene Mohrrüben schmecken am besten*” (“stolen carrots taste best”) expresses the idea that forbidden or unauthorized actions appear more attractive and pleasurable. Here, “stolen” does not denote criminality but rather the psychological appeal of prohibited actions. This proverb is a folk adaptation of the Biblical concept of the “forbidden fruit” (the apple in Eden), reflecting the human tendency to desire what is inaccessible or prohibited.

In Uzbek culture, this concept is also expressed in various forms, such as “*Taqiqlangan meva shirin*” (“forbidden fruit is sweet”) and “*Birovning xotini qiz*

ko’rinar, birovning tovug’i g’oz ko’rinar” (the tendency to idealize what belongs to others).

According to Uzbek explanatory dictionaries and folklore sources, expressions involving carrots are primarily associated with their shape, color, and agricultural significance [9; 10]. In Uzbek culture, the carrot is not only a food product but also a symbol of certain social and physical characteristics: “*Oshga sabzi yarashar, qizga – tamiz*” (“carrots suit pilaf as decor suits a girl”) emphasizes contextual appropriateness; “*Sabzi yerda aziz, odam elda aziz*” (“carrots are valuable in the soil, people are valuable among people”) highlights the importance of natural and social belonging; and “*Sabzi rang*” denotes an orange or reddish-yellow color, commonly used in artistic and descriptive contexts [12].

In German literature and philosophy, the onion (Zwiebel) occupies a special metaphorical position. For instance, in Günter Grass’s autobiographical work *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (“Peeling the Onion”), the act of peeling layers of an onion symbolizes the process of uncovering memories and confronting painful truths. The German expression “*eine Zwiebel hat viele Häute*” (“an onion has many layers”) is conceptually close to the Uzbek proverb “*Piyozning po’sti ko’p, yomonning gapi ko’p*” (“an onion has many layers; a bad person has many words”), though it carries deeper cultural and philosophical implications. It reflects the complexity of human nature and the necessity of revealing multiple layers to reach one’s true essence.

In Uzbek explanatory dictionaries, onion-related phraseological units include: “*Qorni piyoz po’stiday*” (“as thin as an onion peel”) meaning extreme hunger; “*Piyoz artgandek*” (“like peeling an onion”) referring to a step-by-step or easy sequential process; and “*Piyozga (po’stiga) arzimaydi*” (“not worth even an onion peel”) meaning something completely worthless or insignificant.

CONCLUSION

It is well established that the phraseological system of each language is closely linked to the historical lifestyle and climatic conditions of its speakers. In German, the apple (Apfel) and potato (Kartoffel) occupy a central position [1], functioning not only as food items but also as universal metaphors for distance, lineage, and life philosophy. In Uzbek, by contrast, fruits typical of Central Asia (pomegranate, apricot, apple, grape) and melon crops (melon, watermelon, pumpkin) dominate the system, reflecting an agrarian mentality deeply rooted in agricultural traditions [4].

The comparative analysis of flora-based phraseological units in German and Uzbek reveals that structurally identical expressions are rare across the two languages.

However, both cultures employ rich figurative means derived from different flora components. The findings confirm that flora-based phraseological units are not merely stylistic embellishments of language but constitute a fundamental component of a people's linguistic worldview. Through melon crops and fruit-vegetable imagery, evaluations of psychological, social, and physical human conditions are expressed, thereby reflecting the distinct national mentalities of both languages.

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