

Cultural codes in modern linguistic semiotics

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Abstract: This study explores the role of cultural codes in linguistic semiotics, focusing on their representation in Uzbek and Slavic phraseological units. Phraseological expressions, including idioms, proverbs, and metaphors, serve as linguistic vehicles for national identity, historical consciousness, and collective memory. Drawing from semiotic theories by Ferdinand de Saussure, Umberto Eco, and Yuri Lotman, this research investigates how phraseology encodes socio-cultural knowledge. Using a comparative linguistic-semiotic approach, this study categorizes phraseological expressions based on D. Chandler's and V.V. Krasnix's typologies of cultural codes.

Findings reveal that while certain cultural codes—such as somatic, spatial, and temporal codes—are universal, many idioms remain culturally specific, shaped by historical, religious, and social traditions. Additionally, digital media and globalization have transformed the semantic structures of phraseological expressions, leading to code-switching, hybrid expressions, and memetic reinterpretations. This study contributes to semiotic modeling, intercultural communication, and cognitive linguistics by demonstrating how phraseology serves as a bridge between language and cultural identity.

Keywords: Semiotics, cultural codes, phraseology, Uzbek language, Slavic languages, linguistic modeling, national identity, intercultural communication, globalization.

Introduction: Language is not merely a system of communication but a repository of culture, history, and collective experience. The study of cultural codes within linguistic semiotics provides insight into how societies construct meaning and transmit knowledge across generations. Semiotic traditions, from structuralism to post-structuralism, have emphasized that signs and symbols carry layers of cultural significance beyond their immediate linguistic function (Saussure, 1916; Eco, 1976).

In this context, phraseological units—idioms, proverbs, metaphors—are particularly rich in cultural content. They serve as compressed narratives, encoding worldviews, value systems, and historical experiences. However, while phraseological studies have been extensively conducted in European and Slavic languages (Kovshova, 2010; Krasnix, 2003), less research has focused on Uzbek and other Turkic languages, which possess a similarly deep-rooted semiotic structure.

This paper aims to:

1. Analyze the typology of cultural codes in linguistic semiotics.
2. Examine phraseological expressions as cultural codes in Uzbek and Slavic languages.
3. Compare the commonalities and divergences in the phraseological representation of cultural codes.
4. Discuss the transformation of cultural codes in the digital age and globalization.

The study contributes to the growing field of cultural semiotics by providing an in-depth exploration of how different linguistic traditions encode their historical and cultural consciousness through phraseology.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Cultural Codes

The study of cultural codes is rooted in the broader field of semiotics. Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) introduced the structuralist perspective, emphasizing the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs. Later, Umberto Eco (1976) expanded on this theory, arguing that cultural codes are "secondary modeling systems" that structure

human perception and behavior.

Yuri Lotman (1990), a leading figure in the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School, conceptualized culture as a "semiotic space" where texts, symbols, and narratives interact through specific coding mechanisms. He introduced the notion of "secondary modeling systems," emphasizing that cultural codes shape how societies interpret reality. Lotman's theory is particularly relevant to phraseology, as idioms and proverbs often function as compressed cultural narratives.

D. Chandler (2002) classified semiotic codes into three broad categories:

1. Social codes – including verbal and non-verbal communication (body language, fashion, customs).
2. Textual codes – such as aesthetic and genre conventions.
3. Interpretive codes – linked to cognitive and ideological frameworks.

V.V. Krasnix (2003) further refined the concept, categorizing cultural codes into six thematic groups: somatic (body-related), spatial, temporal, object-based, biomorphic (nature-related), and spiritual codes. These classifications provide a framework for analyzing cultural encoding in phraseological expressions.

Phraseology as a Carrier of Cultural Codes

Phraseological units, such as idioms and proverbs, encapsulate cultural history and social norms. M.L. Kovshova (2010) describes phraseology as a "linguistic museum" preserving traditional knowledge. According to Z.G. Sabitova (2015), phraseological expressions serve as mnemonic devices, transmitting cultural connotations through generations.

Several studies have explored phraseological expressions in Slavic languages, demonstrating how idioms reflect historical realities, folk wisdom, and national identity. However, Turkic phraseology remains underexplored in this regard. This study seeks to address this gap by examining Uzbek phraseological expressions in comparison to their Slavic counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a comparative linguistic-semiotic approach to analyze phraseological expressions in Uzbek and Slavic languages, focusing on their cultural significance. A corpus of 200 phraseological units was compiled from various sources, including Uzbek and Russian linguistic dictionaries, folklore texts, and ethnolinguistic studies. The research methodology integrates lexical-semantic analysis to examine the cultural meanings embedded in phraseological expressions, comparative analysis to highlight linguistic commonalities and divergences, and cultural-historical interpretation to trace the origins, transformations, and socio-historical contexts of these phraseological units. This interdisciplinary approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the semiotic functions of phraseology across different linguistic and cultural traditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of phraseological units in Uzbek and Slavic languages reveals a complex system of cultural coding that reflects historical experiences, social norms, and collective worldviews. The results indicate that while some cultural codes are universal, others are deeply embedded in the unique ethnolinguistic consciousness of each language group.

Cross-Linguistic Patterns in Cultural Codes

Phraseological expressions in Uzbek and Slavic languages exhibit both structural similarities and semantic divergences, depending on their historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. By categorizing idioms and proverbs into six types of cultural codes, we identify significant trends in how different linguistic communities encode social knowledge, moral values, and worldview interpretations.

1. Somatic Codes (Body-Related Expressions)

Somatic codes are among the most widespread cultural codes, as body parts serve as primary metaphors for human experiences across cultures.

Phrase	Language	Literal Meaning	Cultural Significance
Qo'li ochiq (Қўли очик)	Uzbek	"Open-handed"	Describes generosity and hospitality, central to Uzbek culture.
Широкая душа (Shirokaya dusha)	Russian	"Wide soul"	Reflects Slavic cultural emphasis on emotional generosity and openness.

While both expressions convey generosity, Uzbek emphasizes physical giving ("open hand"), whereas Russian highlights an internalized personality trait ("wide soul"). This distinction suggests that Uzbek generosity is often material, while Slavic generosity is

more emotional.

Similarly, expressions related to body parts and social status exhibit cross-cultural variation:

Phrase	Language	Meaning	Cultural Interpretation
Boshing ko'kka yetmoq	Uzbek	Extreme happiness	Sky as a metaphor for joy and success.
Носиться в облаках (Nosit'sya v oblakakh)	Russian	Daydreaming	Clouds represent unrealistic thinking.

Here, the Uzbek idiom equates happiness with ascension to the sky, symbolizing spiritual elevation and success. Conversely, the Russian idiom sees clouds as a sign of detachment from reality, implying a more skeptical worldview.

2. Spatial Codes (Place and Distance-Related Expressions)

Spatial codes often reflect a community's perception of distance, movement, and geographical awareness.

Phrase	Language	Literal Meaning	Cultural Interpretation
Buruning tagida	Uzbek	"Under one's nose"	Something very close but unnoticed.
Под носом (Pod nosom)	Russian	"Under the nose"	Similar meaning, but with stronger irony.

This example illustrates linguistic universality, as both languages use the nose as a symbol of proximity and perception. However, the Russian version often carries an ironic tone, implying neglect or ignorance.

Another intriguing example of spatial coding is the Uzbek proverb:

- Tentakka To'ytepa bir qadam (Tentak uchun To'ytepa bir qadam) → "For a fool, To'ytepa is one step away."

- Meaning: A reckless person underestimates

distance, effort, or consequences.

This expression reflects Uzbek oral tradition, where To'ytepa (a real location) serves as a cultural reference point. No direct Slavic equivalent exists, but similar expressions such as "Пешком до Китая" ("On foot to China") humorously exaggerate distance.

3. Temporal Codes (Time-Related Expressions)

Temporal codes provide insight into how cultures perceive history, continuity, and the passage of time.

Phrase	Language	Meaning	Cultural Context
Daqyonusdan qolgan	Uzbek	Extremely old	Reference to an ancient legendary king.
Старо как мир (Staro kak mir)	Russian	"As old as the world"	Universal metaphor for extreme antiquity.

Both expressions emphasize historical continuity, but while Russian uses "the world" as a universal reference, Uzbek invokes a mythical past. This suggests a stronger folklore influence in Uzbek historical consciousness.

4. Object-Based Codes (Material and Artifact-Related Expressions)

Material culture often finds expression in proverbs and idioms that reference traditional objects.

Phrase	Language	Literal Meaning	Cultural Significance
Tarvuzi qo'ltig'idan tushdi	Uzbek	"The watermelon fell from his armpit"	Describes disappointment or embarrassment.
Опозорился на всю деревню (Opozorilsya na vsyu derevnyu)	Russian	"Disgraced in front of the whole village"	Highlights communal judgment.

The Uzbek phrase references watermelon, an agricultural staple, metaphorically linking physical mishap with emotional embarrassment. The Russian phrase underscores social perception, reflecting a more communal mindset.

5. Biomorphic Codes (Nature-Related Expressions)

Biomorphic codes use animal and natural elements to convey cultural perceptions.

Phrase	Language	Meaning	Symbolism
It hurar, karvon o'tar	Uzbek	"The dog barks, the caravan moves on"	Patience in the face of criticism.
Собака лает, ветер носит (Sobaka laet, veter nosit)	Russian	"The dog barks, but the wind carries the sound away"	Similar meaning, emphasizing insignificance.

While both proverbs advise ignoring criticism, the Uzbek version uses the image of a caravan (a historically relevant concept), while the Russian version highlights the ephemeral nature of words.

Expressions

Many proverbs and idioms reflect spirituality, ethics, and moral behavior.

6. Spiritual Codes (Religion and Ethics-Related)

Phrase	Language	Meaning	Cultural Context
Devorning ham qulog'i bor	Uzbek	"Even the walls have ears"	Warning against careless speech.
И у стен есть уши (I u sten yest' ushi)	Russian	"The walls also have ears"	Similar cautionary meaning.

This shared phrase illustrates how cultural memory encodes surveillance and discretion, possibly originating from historical political climates.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of Uzbek and Slavic phraseology demonstrates that cultural codes serve as key mechanisms for encoding collective memory, social values, and historical experiences. While certain semiotic structures are universal, many idiomatic expressions remain unique to their respective cultures, reflecting ethnolinguistic identity.

Future research should investigate the adaptation of

phraseological expressions in digital discourse and their role in cross-cultural communication.

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