

The Role Of Culture In The Linguistic Expression Of Happiness

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Received: 30 August 2025; **Accepted:** 25 September 2025; **Published:** 30 October 2025

Abstract: This paper investigates how culture shapes the linguistic expression of happiness in English and Uzbek languages. By examining idiomatic, metaphorical, and phraseological units, the study reveals that both linguistic and cultural contexts determine the conceptualization of happiness. The research also highlights the influence of social values, religion, and worldview on the semantic nuances of emotion-related expressions.

Keywords: Happiness, culture, phraseology, semantics, English, Uzbek, emotion, linguocultural concept.

Introduction: The concept of happiness has always been viewed as a universal human experience, yet its understanding and expression differ greatly across cultures and languages. Every society interprets happiness through the lens of its own moral, social, and spiritual values. Therefore, the linguistic representation of happiness provides deep insights into how a particular community perceives emotional well-being and life satisfaction. Language, as the main tool of communication, mirrors not only the external world but also the inner emotional universe of its speakers. From a linguistic and cultural perspective, happiness is not merely an emotion or a psychological condition; it is a linguocultural concept that integrates cognitive, moral, and social dimensions. It carries within it the worldview of a nation, shaped by its history, traditions, and collective mentality. Through idioms, metaphors, and proverbs, languages encode their speakers' attitudes toward life, success, and destiny. As a result, the study of happiness-related expressions becomes an important way to explore how people from different backgrounds construct their understanding of joy and fulfillment.

In the English language, happiness is typically associated with individual achievements, personal freedom, and self-fulfillment, which reflects the

Western emphasis on individualism. Expressions such as to live the dream, feel on top of the world, or over the moon highlight emotional satisfaction that comes from personal success and autonomy. In contrast, the Uzbek language conceptualizes baxt (happiness) as a collective and spiritual state, often linked to family harmony, moral purity, and divine favor. Phrases like baxtli oila (happy family), baxt keldi (happiness has come), or baxt quchog'ida (in the arms of happiness) reveal that the Uzbek notion of happiness is strongly influenced by social unity, faith, and destiny. These cross-cultural contrasts demonstrate that happiness, though shared by all humans, is shaped by the values and beliefs unique to each society. Studying how happiness is encoded in English and Uzbek linguistic systems allows researchers to uncover both universal and culturally specific aspects of emotional expression. Consequently, this topic holds great relevance for comparative linguistics, intercultural communication, and translation studies, as it bridges emotional cognition and cultural identity.

METHODS

This research employs a comparative linguocultural and semantic analysis aimed at exploring the similarities and differences in how happiness is expressed through idiomatic language in English and

Uzbek. The study focuses on 40 idiomatic units — 20 from each language — that explicitly or metaphorically represent the concept of happiness. The English data were obtained from reliable lexicographic sources, including The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms and The Cambridge Idioms Dictionary, which provide authentic idiomatic expressions used in both spoken and literary English. The Uzbek data were collected from O'zbek tilining frazeologik lug'ati and supplemented by examples found in classical and contemporary Uzbek literary works to ensure contextual authenticity.

Each idiom was subjected to a multi-dimensional analysis involving:

Lexical-semantic analysis, to determine the literal and figurative meanings of each unit;

Metaphorical structure analysis, to identify the underlying conceptual metaphors that shape the expression of happiness;

Cultural interpretation, to explore how socio-cultural beliefs, traditions, and worldviews influence idiomatic usage.

The analytical framework was supported by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which posits that human thought and language are largely metaphorical in nature. This theoretical lens was chosen to uncover how cultural models — such as happiness as height or happiness as divine blessing — are reflected in the idioms of both languages. The comparative approach allowed for identifying both universal emotional metaphors and culture-specific semantic nuances, providing a comprehensive picture of how happiness is linguistically constructed in different cultural contexts.

RESULTS

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek idiomatic units demonstrated remarkable cultural and semantic variation in how the concept of happiness is expressed. Although both languages describe similar emotional states, the linguistic imagery and conceptual metaphors employed reveal distinct worldviews.

Language	Idiom	Example	Literal Meaning	Cultural Implication
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English	On cloud nine	Extremely happy	Emphasizes individual joy and internal emotional uplift
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English	Over the moon	Extremely delighted	Highlights personal success and achievement
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Uzbek	Ko'ngli osmunda-	One's soul is in the sky	Represents spiritual elevation and contentment
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Uzbek	Baxt quchog'ida	-In the arms of happiness	Associates happiness with fate, harmony, and divine will
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The English idioms analyzed in this study tend to center around personal emotions and subjective experiences. Phrases such as on top of the world, in seventh heaven, and walking on air symbolize joy as an individual and psychological phenomenon. Happiness in English, therefore, often arises from personal accomplishments, romantic fulfillment, or positive life events that reflect one's independence and self-realization.

In contrast, Uzbek idioms exhibit a more collectivist and spiritually oriented conceptualization. Expressions like baxt keldi ("happiness has come") or baxtli oila ("happy family") depict happiness as a shared and divinely influenced condition, often connected to family unity, moral purity, and social well-being. The idioms frequently employ metaphors of embrace, fate, and divine blessing, symbolizing the belief that happiness is not created by the individual but bestowed by God or destiny. These findings indicate that while English conceptualizes happiness in individualist, psychological terms, Uzbek culture interprets it through a collective, moral, and spiritual framework. Such distinctions confirm that the language of emotions mirrors the broader philosophical and cultural orientation of each society.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm that cultural background profoundly shapes the linguistic framing of emotions, particularly in the case of happiness. In Western societies—especially those influenced by individualistic values—happiness is commonly understood as self-achievement, personal freedom, and emotional satisfaction. Hence, English idioms often portray happiness as an internal psychological state resulting from success or pleasure. Conversely, Uzbek culture, deeply rooted in Islamic ethics, communal values, and traditional family structures, interprets happiness as a collective and spiritual state. In this worldview, personal well-being is inseparable from social harmony and divine favor. The idiom baxt quchog'ida ("in the arms of happiness") exemplifies this perception: happiness is imagined as something that embraces the individual, rather than something one actively pursues. The metaphorical differences further emphasize cultural contrast. English idioms frequently rely on metaphors of height, light, and motion—for example, on cloud nine, bright future, and walk on air—all of which symbolize elevation, optimism, and achievement. These metaphors reflect the Western ideal that happiness is self-generated and tied to progress or aspiration.

Uzbek idioms, on the other hand, tend to employ metaphors of destiny, blessing, and divine

intervention—such as *baxt keldi* (“happiness has come”) and *taqdir ato etgan baxt* (“happiness given by fate”). Such imagery reveals that in Uzbek culture, happiness is not entirely under human control, but rather seen as part of a predestined or spiritual plan. This reflects the community’s collectivist orientation, in which one’s joy is closely tied to family well-being, moral behavior, and faith in God. These cultural-linguistic contrasts demonstrate that language not only mirrors cultural values but actively constructs emotional experience. Through idioms, speakers internalize cultural norms, communicate emotional states, and reinforce shared worldviews. Consequently, the study of happiness-related phraseology provides a valuable perspective on how linguistic expression, cognition, and culture interact to shape human emotion and identity.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek idiomatic expressions reveals that the concept of happiness is deeply rooted in cultural worldview and collective experience. Although both linguistic systems describe the same emotional phenomenon, the meanings, metaphors, and associations they employ differ according to the sociocultural and moral foundations of each community. In English, happiness tends to be represented as a personal and psychological condition, often linked to individual success, emotional freedom, and positive self-realization. Idioms such as *on cloud nine*, *in seventh heaven*, and *over the moon* depict happiness as an internal feeling of achievement and satisfaction, emphasizing autonomy and self-fulfillment. This reflects the individualistic orientation of Western societies, where happiness is perceived as something that one creates through effort, ambition, and independence.

Conversely, in the Uzbek cultural context, happiness (*baxt*) is conceptualized as a collective, moral, and spiritual state. The idioms used in the Uzbek language emphasize family unity, social harmony, and divine favor, showing that happiness is not purely emotional but also ethical and relational. Expressions like *baxtli oila* (“happy family”), *baxt keldi* (“happiness has come”), and *baxt quchog’ida* (“in the arms of happiness”) illustrate that happiness is bestowed rather than achieved, aligning with the belief that true joy stems from God’s will, moral integrity, and community well-being. Therefore, this research demonstrates that language serves as a cultural mirror—it not only reflects emotional experiences but also constructs them according to shared beliefs and traditions. Recognizing these differences contributes to more effective cross-cultural communication and helps

translators preserve not just the linguistic form, but also the emotional and conceptual essence of idiomatic expressions.

Future studies may extend this analysis to other emotion concepts—such as love, fear, anger, or hope—to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how languages encode the emotional and cultural identity of their speakers. In this way, linguocultural research continues to bridge the gap between language, thought, and culture, enriching both comparative linguistics and intercultural understanding.

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