

Semantic Features of Phraseological Units in The Uzbek Language

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Abstract: This article examines the semantic features of phraseological units in the Uzbek language from the perspective of modern linguistics and linguodidactics. Phraseological units represent one of the most expressive and culturally marked layers of the lexical system, reflecting not only stable figurative meanings but also the national worldview, value orientations, and communicative traditions of the people. The purpose of the study is to identify the main semantic properties of Uzbek phraseological units, explain the mechanisms of their meaning formation, and determine their functional role in speech and text. The research is based on descriptive, semantic, comparative, and contextual analysis methods. The article discusses the relationship between direct and figurative meaning, semantic integrity, reinterpreted nomination, emotional-expressive coloring, polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, and national-cultural specificity within Uzbek phraseology. Special attention is paid to the interaction between phraseological meaning and lexical meaning, as well as to the contextual transformation of phraseological units in artistic and everyday discourse. The findings show that the semantics of phraseological units in Uzbek is characterized by complexity, figurativeness, stability, and cultural depth. Phraseological units function as semantic wholes whose meanings are not reducible to the sum of their components, and this feature distinguishes them from free word combinations. The study concludes that phraseological semantics occupies an important place in the system of the Uzbek language and requires comprehensive analysis in theoretical linguistics, lexicography, stylistics, and language teaching methodology.

Keywords: Phraseological units, Uzbek language, semantics, figurative meaning, phraseology, lexical meaning, semantic integrity, national-cultural specificity, phraseological synonymy, expressive coloring.

Introduction: The vocabulary of every language contains not only separate lexical units but also stable combinations that function as ready-made semantic structures. These combinations, commonly referred to as phraseological units, possess a particular semantic organization that distinguishes them from free syntactic constructions. In the Uzbek language, phraseological units form an important layer of linguistic wealth, because they preserve historical experience, moral evaluation, social attitudes, and the national mentality in concentrated verbal form. Their semantic structure is often complex and figurative, and their meanings emerge through semantic transformation rather than through the direct sum of the meanings of their components.

The study of phraseological semantics is especially

relevant in contemporary Uzbek linguistics because phraseological units are central to expressive communication, literary style, and cultural representation. When speakers use expressions such as *ko'ngli tog'day ko'tarildi*, *tili uzun*, *ko'ngliga tugmoq*, or *boshi osmonga yetmoq*, they do not simply combine lexical meanings mechanically; they activate conventional figurative meanings developed through collective language practice. Therefore, the semantic analysis of phraseological units requires attention to metaphorical reinterpretation, semantic integrity, emotional-evaluative coloring, and contextual variation.

In linguistic theory, phraseology has been treated as a special branch closely connected with lexicology, semantics, stylistics, and cultural linguistics. Uzbek

scholars have also made significant contributions to the study of phraseological systems, their structural classification, semantic properties, and lexicographic description. However, the semantic aspect of Uzbek phraseological units remains especially important because it helps reveal how meaning is condensed, transmitted, and culturally coded in stable expressions.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the semantic features of phraseological units in the Uzbek language and to explain their specific nature as linguistic signs. The article seeks to clarify the relationship between phraseological meaning and lexical meaning, to identify the main semantic types and processes found in Uzbek phraseology, and to show the role of phraseological units in conveying evaluation, imagery, and cultural experience.

The study is based on a corpus of phraseological units widely used in modern Uzbek literary language, colloquial speech, and artistic discourse. Examples were selected from phraseological dictionaries, explanatory dictionaries, Uzbek literary texts, and linguistic studies devoted to phraseology and semantics. The analysis also relies on theoretical works in general phraseology, Turkic linguistics, and Uzbek lexicology.

Several methods were employed in the research. The descriptive method made it possible to identify the general semantic properties of phraseological units and explain their functioning in the language system. The semantic analysis method was used to examine the internal structure of phraseological meaning, especially the interaction between denotative, connotative, figurative, and evaluative components. Contextual analysis helped reveal how phraseological units actualize or modify their meanings in real speech and literary texts. The comparative method was applied where necessary to distinguish phraseological meaning from the meanings of free lexical combinations and to compare synonymous or antonymous phraseological structures. Elements of linguocultural interpretation were also included in order to demonstrate the national-cultural specificity of Uzbek phraseological semantics.

The methodological basis of the study rests on the understanding that phraseological units are stable, reproducible language formations characterized by semantic integrity and figurative reinterpretation. From this perspective, they must be analyzed not only as formal combinations of words but as special semantic complexes functioning as units of nomination and expression.

The analysis of Uzbek phraseological material demonstrates that phraseological units possess several

essential semantic features that define their linguistic status. The first and most fundamental feature is semantic integrity. A phraseological unit expresses a generalized meaning that cannot be fully derived from the separate lexical meanings of its components. For example, in the expression *boshi osmonga yetmoq*, the literal meanings of head, sky, and to reach do not explain the phraseological meaning “to be extremely happy.” The expression functions as a single semantic whole. This integrity is the core criterion that separates phraseological units from free word combinations.

Another important feature is figurative reinterpretation. In Uzbek phraseology, many units emerge through metaphorical or metonymical transfer. Expressions connected with body parts, natural objects, motion, space, color, and domestic life frequently develop figurative meanings. For instance, *ko‘z yumoq* does not merely denote the physical act of closing the eyes; in phraseological use it may mean “to die” or “to ignore deliberately,” depending on context. This semantic transformation is based on associative thinking and collective cultural experience. Figurative reinterpretation enables phraseological units to carry compressed images, making speech more vivid and expressive.

The study also shows that phraseological meaning usually contains a connotative component. Unlike neutral lexical units, phraseological expressions often include emotional, expressive, or evaluative shades of meaning. When a speaker says *tili zahar*, the phrase does not only describe speech behavior; it conveys a negative emotional attitude toward a sharp-tongued person. Similarly, *bag‘ri keng* contains not only the meaning of generosity or tolerance but also positive evaluation. Thus, phraseological semantics in Uzbek is not limited to denotative reference; it frequently combines image, evaluation, and emotional coloring in one semantic structure.

A further semantic feature of Uzbek phraseological units is their ability to represent human states and qualities in a condensed figurative form. A considerable number of phraseological expressions are anthropocentric in nature. They describe joy, sorrow, fear, anger, pride, hesitation, greed, kindness, and other psychological or moral qualities. Expressions such as *yuragi orqasiga tortmoq*, *ko‘ngli cho‘kmoq*, *dili siyoh bo‘lmoq*, and *og‘zi qulog‘ida* provide not only information about internal states but also culturally recognizable figurative representations of those states. This anthropocentric orientation is one of the major semantic characteristics of Uzbek phraseology.

The results also indicate that phraseological units may show semantic polysemy. Although many

phraseological units are relatively fixed in meaning, some can develop more than one figurative sense. For example, a stable expression may denote one meaning in everyday speech and acquire an extended or contextually shifted meaning in literary discourse. The existence of phraseological polysemy demonstrates that phraseological semantics is not entirely static; it can expand under the influence of usage and context. However, even in such cases, the semantic field remains limited by the stable figurative core of the expression.

Phraseological synonymy is another significant semantic phenomenon in Uzbek. Different phraseological units can express close or similar meanings while differing in imagery, stylistic coloring, or degree of expressiveness. Expressions denoting fear, happiness, anger, or deceit often form synonymous series. This synonymy enriches the expressive resources of the language and allows speakers to choose expressions according to communicative purpose and stylistic context. At the same time, phraseological synonymy is never absolute because each unit preserves its own figurative basis and connotative nuance.

The analysis further reveals the presence of phraseological antonymy. Oppositional semantic relations between phraseological units reflect the contrastive organization of human experience. For example, expressions associated with joy and sadness, courage and fear, generosity and greed, sincerity and hypocrisy may function as phraseological antonyms. Such oppositions strengthen the semantic system of phraseology and demonstrate that phraseological meaning participates in broader lexical-semantic relations within the language.

One of the most distinctive features of Uzbek phraseological semantics is its national-cultural specificity. Phraseological units often arise from everyday practices, historical memory, agricultural life, moral norms, and traditional imagery familiar to the Uzbek speech community. Their meanings are deeply rooted in culturally shared knowledge. Because of this, phraseological units cannot always be translated literally into another language without semantic loss. The cultural background embedded in phraseological meaning makes these units valuable linguistic evidence of worldview and national identity.

The research also confirms that phraseological meaning is characterized by relative stability. Although contextual adaptation is possible, the core semantic structure remains fixed enough for the unit to be recognized and reproduced by speakers. This stability ensures communicative efficiency because

phraseological expressions are stored in collective linguistic memory as ready-made units. Yet stability does not mean semantic immobility; rather, it means the preservation of a conventional figurative core within possible contextual variation.

The obtained results allow us to interpret Uzbek phraseological units as specific semantic formations located at the intersection of lexical nomination and figurative expression. Their semantic integrity proves that phraseological units function similarly to words in many respects, yet they differ from single lexical items by virtue of their structural complexity and motivated imagery. This dual nature explains why phraseology has long occupied an intermediate position between lexicology and syntax. In semantic terms, however, phraseological units should be regarded as autonomous nominative entities.

The distinction between lexical meaning and phraseological meaning is central to the interpretation of the data. A lexical unit usually names an object, action, or quality directly, whereas a phraseological unit names it indirectly through an established image. This indirectness does not reduce precision; on the contrary, it often enhances communicative effect by combining denotation with evaluation and emotional force. In Uzbek speech culture, phraseological units are especially effective because they create semantic density. A speaker can express a complex psychological state, social judgment, or interpersonal attitude in a brief and vivid form.

Another important issue concerns the relationship between phraseological semantics and metaphor. The findings show that metaphor is one of the key mechanisms underlying phraseological meaning formation in Uzbek. However, phraseological meaning is not identical to a spontaneous metaphor created in discourse. A phraseological unit represents a conventionalized metaphor that has become fixed in collective usage. Once stabilized, it is perceived not as a newly invented figurative expression but as a recognized linguistic sign. This conventionalization explains the reproducibility and semantic predictability of phraseological units.

The presence of emotional-evaluative meaning in Uzbek phraseology also deserves attention. The semantics of many phraseological units cannot be described adequately without accounting for connotation. This feature connects phraseology with pragmatics and stylistics. In real communication, speakers choose phraseological expressions not only to denote a situation but also to influence the listener, intensify evaluation, create irony, soften criticism, or strengthen praise. Therefore, the semantic study of

phraseological units should always include expressive and pragmatic dimensions.

The national-cultural markedness of Uzbek phraseological units confirms that phraseology is an important object of linguocultural analysis. Semantic interpretation cannot be fully separated from cultural context, because many expressions preserve traces of traditional occupations, family relations, religious ethics, social hierarchy, and folk symbolism. In this sense, phraseological semantics becomes a repository of collective memory. The Uzbek language reflects the worldview of its speakers through the stable images encoded in phraseological units. Consequently, phraseological research contributes not only to theoretical linguistics but also to the study of culture, mentality, and national identity.

From a pedagogical point of view, the semantic complexity of phraseological units presents both challenges and opportunities. Language learners often understand the lexical meanings of the components but fail to grasp the figurative whole. This problem is especially evident in foreign language teaching and in the teaching of native language culture at advanced levels. A semantic approach to phraseology can help learners understand how stable images function, how evaluation is encoded, and how context influences interpretation. Therefore, phraseological semantics should occupy a significant place in lexicology, stylistics, and language teaching methodology.

The discussion also suggests the importance of lexicographic work in phraseology. Since phraseological meaning cannot be inferred mechanically, dictionaries must provide not only explanatory equivalents but also semantic commentary, usage labels, stylistic information, and cultural notes. For the Uzbek language, comprehensive phraseological dictionaries remain especially valuable for preserving and systematizing the semantic richness of stable expressions.

The study has shown that phraseological units in the Uzbek language possess a distinctive semantic nature defined by semantic integrity, figurative reinterpretation, stability, expressiveness, and national-cultural markedness. Their meanings are not reducible to the direct sum of their components; instead, they function as stable semantic wholes formed through collective linguistic experience. Phraseological units serve as powerful means of representing human states, moral qualities, social relations, and cultural values in compressed figurative form.

The research confirms that Uzbek phraseological semantics includes denotative, connotative,

evaluative, and stylistic layers. Such units frequently display metaphorical motivation, emotional-expressive coloring, synonymic and antonymic relations, and occasional polysemy. These features make phraseological units one of the richest and most expressive components of the Uzbek lexical system. Their semantic organization reflects both the internal mechanisms of language and the cultural-historical experience of the Uzbek people.

In theoretical terms, phraseological semantics deserves further study within lexicology, semantics, stylistics, discourse analysis, and linguoculturology. In practical terms, the results of such research are important for dictionary compilation, literary analysis, translation, and language education. The semantic investigation of phraseological units thus remains a productive direction for modern Uzbek linguistics and a necessary condition for a deeper understanding of the language's figurative and cultural resources.

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