

THE STUDY AND MUTUAL TRANSLATION OF SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This paper examines the linguistic and cultural challenges associated with the study and mutual translation of somatic phraseological units (SPUs) in English and Uzbek. SPUs—idioms involving body parts—are prevalent in both languages and often serve as expressions of emotion, character, and physical state. However, due to differences in cultural background and metaphorical thinking, their direct translation often leads to semantic distortion. This study investigates key strategies in translating these idioms accurately and highlights examples where literal and equivalent translations succeed or fail. The article presents theoretical ideas in this regard and proves them with examples.

Keywords: Somatic phraseologisms, idioms, translation, cultural equivalence, metaphor, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics.

Introduction

Somatic phraseological units (SPUs) are among the most vivid and culturally loaded expressions in any language. They often rely on metaphorical usage of body parts (e.g., "heart", "head", "eyes") to convey abstract meanings such as emotions, behaviors, and judgments. Both English and Uzbek are rich in such idioms, but due to their culturally embedded nature, translating them presents unique linguistic and semantic challenges.

The aim of this article is to investigate the features of SPUs in English and Uzbek, and to explore effective translation strategies that maintain both the meaning and expressive power of the source idiom in the target language.

The Nature of Somatic Phraseologisms

Somatic idioms involve human anatomy as metaphorical references. They function on multiple levels: denotative, connotative, and cultural. For example:

English: "To keep one's head" – to stay calm.

Uzbek: "Boshingni yo'qotma" – literally "Don't lose your head", with a similar meaning.

While some idioms show a high degree of equivalence, others are deeply rooted in local traditions and worldview, which makes translation less straightforward.

Translation Challenges of SPUs

Lack of Direct Equivalents

Some idioms in one language may not have a counterpart in the other.



Uzbek: Ko‘ngli ko‘tarildi – lit. "His/her spirit lifted" – means “He/she is in a good mood.”

→ Literal translation may confuse non-native speakers.

English: Cold feet – means hesitation before an important decision.

→ In Uzbek, the direct translation (sovuq oyoqlar) carries only literal meaning.

Semantic Shifts and Cultural Filters

Certain body metaphors carry different connotations. For instance:

Head:

English: “To have a good head on one’s shoulders” – wise, reasonable

Uzbek: Boshida aql bor – similar, but often applied to elders or leaders

Heart:

English: “Broken-hearted” – emotional pain

Uzbek: Yuragi ezildi – “His/her heart got crushed” – metaphorically similar but emotionally more intense

Strategies for Translating Somatic Idioms

Equivalent Idiom Substitution

Replace with an idiom of the same meaning in the target language.

To bite one’s tongue → Tishini tishiga qo‘yish (to stay silent)

Literal Translation + Explanation

When no equivalent exists, provide a literal translation with contextual or footnote explanation.

To have ants in one’s pants → U o‘zini qo‘yarga joy topmayapti (non-literal rendering that conveys the restlessness)

Functional Translation

Convey the intended effect, even if the imagery differs.

Butterflies in the stomach → Hayajondan ichi qizib ketdi – captures the emotion, not the metaphor

Cultural Adaptation

Use a culturally appropriate idiom with equivalent impact.

To put one's foot in one's mouth → Og‘zidan chiqib ketdi – to speak thoughtlessly

Case Study: Phrase-by-Phrase Comparison

English Idiom	Literal Meaning	Uzbek Equivalent	Translation Strategy
“Break a leg”	Wishing luck	Omad tilayman	Functional translation
“Heart of stone”	Emotionless person	Yuragi tosh	Equivalent idiom
“Pull someone’s leg”	Joke with someone	Mazax qilmoq	Functional translation
“To see eye to eye”	Agree completely	Ko‘zi bilan ko‘rishmoq	No direct equivalent
“To give someone a hand”	Help	Qo‘l berish	Equivalent idiom

Somatic phraseological units reflect not only the language but also the culture, worldview, and value systems of a people. While English and Uzbek share some metaphorical foundations, many idioms are culturally unique. Translating SPUs requires linguistic competence and cultural sensitivity. Using a combination of strategies—idiomatic equivalence, functional



translation, and adaptation—helps to bridge the gap between languages and retain the expressive essence of the original phrase.

Further research in this area can support translation studies, lexicography, and cross-cultural communication, especially in educational and literary contexts.

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