

**ANTHROPOCENTRIC DESCRIPTION OF FIGURATIVE
EXPRESSIONS IN LANGUAGE**

(Based on the Material of English and Uzbek Languages)

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Abstract

The anthropocentric paradigm has become one of the most significant approaches in contemporary linguistics, shifting the focus of linguistic research from language as an autonomous system to the human being as a central factor in language formation and interpretation. Figurative expressions represent one of the most vivid manifestations of the anthropocentric nature of language because they reflect people's perception of the world, emotional experiences, physical characteristics, social relations, cultural values, and cognitive processes. This article examines the anthropocentric features of figurative expressions in English and Uzbek. Particular attention is paid to figurative units based on human body parts, emotions, intellectual activity, interpersonal relations, and everyday experience. A comparative analysis demonstrates that English and Uzbek contain numerous figurative expressions with universal anthropocentric motivations, while their lexical images and cultural associations may differ significantly. The study shows that the human being functions simultaneously as the source, object, and interpretive center of figurative meaning. The anthropocentric investigation of figurative expressions contributes to a deeper understanding of national worldviews, linguistic conceptualization, intercultural communication, and the relationship between language, cognition, and culture.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, figurative expression, figurative meaning, English language, Uzbek language, linguistic worldview, cognition, metaphor, phraseology, culture, human factor.

1. Introduction

Language is not merely a system of grammatical and lexical units used for communication. It is also a means through which human beings conceptualize, interpret, and represent the surrounding world. Every language reflects the experience, knowledge, emotions, values, and cultural traditions of its speakers. For this reason, contemporary linguistics increasingly emphasizes the role of the human being in the formation and interpretation of linguistic meaning.

The anthropocentric paradigm is based on the principle that language should be studied in close connection with its speakers. In contrast to approaches that primarily regard language as an autonomous structural system, anthropocentric linguistics places the individual, human cognition, perception, experience, and culture at the center of linguistic analysis.

Figurative expressions are particularly important from an anthropocentric perspective. They allow speakers to express complex ideas through concrete images derived from human experience. Human body parts, physical actions, emotions, interpersonal relationships, natural phenomena, household activities, and social experience frequently serve as sources for figurative conceptualization.

For example, English contains expressions such as a warm heart, to keep an eye on someone, to lose one's head, and to have a good head for something. Uzbek has corresponding or semantically related expressions such as yuragi keng, ko'z-quloq bo'lmoq, boshini yo'qotmoq, and boshi ishlamoq. Although these expressions are based on similar human experiences, their imagery and cultural connotations may vary.

The aim of this article is to investigate the anthropocentric characteristics of figurative expressions in English and Uzbek and to identify universal and culture-specific features in their conceptualization.

The objectives of the research are:

- to clarify the relationship between anthropocentrism and figurative language;
- to identify major anthropocentric sources of figurative expressions;
- to analyze body-part-based figurative expressions in English and Uzbek;
- to compare emotional and cognitive figurative expressions in the two languages;
- to identify universal and culture-specific aspects of figurative conceptualization.

2. Anthropocentrism as a Linguistic Paradigm

Anthropocentrism in linguistics is closely connected with the recognition of the human factor as a fundamental element of language. The development of cognitive linguistics, linguistic anthropology, psycholinguistics, pragmatics, and linguoculturology has strengthened the anthropocentric orientation of linguistic research.

The central principle of the anthropocentric approach is that language cannot be adequately understood without considering its relationship with the person who creates, uses, and interprets it. Human perception determines how reality is categorized and represented through linguistic structures.

From this perspective, the relationship can be represented as:

HUMAN BEING → PERCEPTION → COGNITION →
CONCEPTUALIZATION → LANGUAGE

This process demonstrates that linguistic expressions are connected with human experience. A speaker does not simply name an object or phenomenon but interprets it through previously acquired knowledge and cultural experience.

Figurative expressions provide particularly clear evidence of this process. Abstract concepts such as love, anger, intelligence, fear, happiness, sadness, and social relationships are often represented through concrete experiences.

For instance, English speakers may describe affection through the expression to have a soft spot for someone. Uzbek speakers may similarly express affection through phrases involving the heart, soul, or eyes. Such expressions reveal the tendency of human beings to understand abstract emotional experiences through familiar physical and sensory domains.

3. Figurative Expressions as a Reflection of Human Experience

Figurative language is traditionally associated with metaphor, metonymy, idioms, comparisons, phraseological units, and other forms of non-literal expression. However, from an anthropocentric perspective, figurative expressions should also be examined as products of human conceptualization.

People frequently understand unfamiliar or abstract phenomena through familiar physical experiences. As a result, the human body becomes one of the most productive sources of figurative meaning.

The following conceptual relationships are common in both English and Uzbek:
HEAD → intelligence and thought

HEART → emotion and affection

EYE → attention and perception

EAR → listening and awareness

TONGUE → speech

HAND → activity and assistance

FOOT → movement and participation

FACE → identity and emotional state

These associations are motivated by the physiological and social functions of body parts. However, each language develops its own phraseological and cultural patterns.

4. Anthropocentric Expressions Based on Body Parts

4.1. The Concept of HEAD

The head is commonly associated with thought, intelligence, responsibility, and decision-making.

In English:

to use one's head – to think intelligently;

to lose one's head – to become unable to think calmly;

to have a good head for mathematics – to be naturally good at mathematics;

to keep one's head – to remain calm in a difficult situation.

In Uzbek:

boshi ishlamoq – to be intelligent / to think well;

boshini yo'qotmoq – to lose one's ability to think rationally;

bosh qotirmoq – to think deeply or worry about something;

boshiga yetmoq – to cause someone's death or bring something to an end, depending on context.

The conceptual connection between the head and intellectual activity is largely universal. It is motivated by the biological location of the brain in the head. However, individual expressions reveal cultural and linguistic differences in the conceptualization of thought and responsibility.

4.2. The Concept of HEART

The heart is one of the most productive anthropocentric sources of figurative meaning.

English examples include:

a kind heart;

a broken heart;

to have one's heart in something;

to take something to heart;

from the bottom of one's heart.

Uzbek examples include:

yuragi keng – generous, broad-minded;

yuragi toza – pure-hearted;

yuragi ezilmoq – to suffer emotionally;

yuragi orqaga tortmoq – to become afraid or hesitant;

yuragiga yaqin olmoq – to take something personally.

In both languages, the heart is closely associated with emotions. Nevertheless, the exact conceptual associations are not identical. In Uzbek, yurak may express courage, emotional sensitivity, affection, fear, generosity, and inner psychological states. English heart also has a wide semantic range, but particular phraseological combinations differ.

This demonstrates the interaction of universal bodily experience and culture-specific linguistic conceptualization.

5. Figurative Expressions Representing Emotions

Emotions constitute another major area of anthropocentric figurative conceptualization. Human beings frequently describe emotions using physical states and actions.

Anger

English:

to blow one's top;

to see red;

to be boiling with anger

Uzbek:

gʻazabdan qaynamoq;

jahli chiqmoq;

qoni qaynamoq.

In both languages, anger is conceptualized through the image of HEAT. This reflects a physiological experience: intense anger may cause increased heart rate, body temperature, and physical tension.

Fear

English:

to be scared stiff;

to have one's heart in one's mouth;

to shake with fear.

Uzbek:

yuragi orqasiga tortmoq;

qo‘rqib ketmoq;

titrab ketmoq.

Fear is often conceptualized through bodily reactions such as trembling, changes in heartbeat, and loss of physical control.

Happiness

English:

to be on cloud nine;

to be over the moon;

to be walking on air.

Uzbek:

boshi osmonga yetmoq;

og‘zi qulog‘ida;

quvonchi ichiga sig‘maslik.

These examples demonstrate that happiness is frequently represented through spatial elevation or physical expansion. Such conceptualization can be described as:

HAPPINESS IS UP / HAPPINESS IS EXPANSION

6. Cognitive and Intellectual Activity

The anthropocentric nature of figurative expressions is also evident in expressions describing thinking, memory, knowledge, and intelligence.

English uses expressions such as:

to rack one's brain;

to have something on one's mind;

to put one's mind to something;

to know something by heart;

to have a sharp mind.

Uzbek expressions include:

bosh qotirmoq;

xayoliga kelmoq;

esida saqlamoq;

yoddan bilmoq;

aqlini ishlatmoq.

These expressions demonstrate that abstract cognitive processes are understood through concrete bodily or spatial experiences.

The conceptual metaphor MIND IS A CONTAINER can be observed in both languages. Information can be “in” one's mind, “on” one's mind, or stored in memory. Such metaphors demonstrate the human tendency to conceptualize invisible mental processes through physical structures.

7. Figurative Expressions and National-Cultural Worldview

Although many anthropocentric figurative expressions have universal foundations, they are not culturally identical. Every linguistic community selects particular images and associations according to its historical experience, traditions, environment, social structure, and cultural values.

Uzbek figurative expressions frequently reflect concepts associated with family, hospitality, respect for elders, community, honor, patience, and interpersonal solidarity.

English figurative language, while also containing universal human concepts, reflects its own historical, social, and cultural experience. Some English idioms contain references to sports, navigation, work, social institutions, and everyday activities that may not have direct equivalents in Uzbek.

For example, the English expression to hit the nail on the head conceptualizes correctness through a physical action. Uzbek may express the same idea using a different image, such as gaping tagiga yetmoq or to‘g‘ri topmoq, depending on context.

Therefore, translation of figurative expressions requires more than replacing one lexical unit with another. The translator must identify the underlying conceptual meaning and then determine whether the target language has an equivalent figurative image.

8. Comparative Analysis of English and Uzbek Figurative Expressions

The comparative study allows us to distinguish three major types of relationships.

8.1. Complete or Close Conceptual Correspondence

In some cases, English and Uzbek expressions are based on similar human experiences.

For example:

English	Uzbek	Concept
to lose one's head	boshini yo'qotmoq	confusion/panic
a kind heart	mehribon yurak	kindness
to keep an eye on	ko'z-quloq bo'lmoq	attention/control
to know by heart	yoddan bilmoq	memory
to rack one's brain	bosh qotirmoq	intensive thinking

These correspondences indicate universal anthropocentric conceptualizations.

8.2. Similar Meaning but Different Images

Some expressions convey similar meanings but use different figurative images. For example, English to be on cloud nine means to be extremely happy. Uzbek boshi osmonga yetmoq conveys a similar emotional state through a different image.

The underlying conceptual structure may be described as:

HAPPINESS → UPWARD MOVEMENT

but the lexical realization differs.

8.3. Culture-Specific Expressions

Some figurative expressions are strongly associated with the cultural experience of one linguistic community and have no direct equivalent in another language. Such expressions are particularly important for linguocultural studies because they reveal culturally specific ways of conceptualizing reality.

9. Anthropocentric Classification of Figurative Expressions

Based on the analyzed material, figurative expressions can be classified according to their anthropocentric source:

Category	English examples	Uzbek examples
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Body	keep an eye on	ko‘z-quloq bo‘lmoq
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Emotion	broken heart	yuragi ezilmoq
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Intelligence	use one's head	boshini ishlatmoq
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Speech	hold one's tongue	tilini tiy-moq
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Activity	lend a hand	qo‘l bermoq
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Character	a big heart	yuragi keng
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Memory	know by heart	yoddan bilmoq
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Fear	scared stiff	yuragi orqasiga tortmoq
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Happiness	on cloud nine	boshi osmonga yetmoq
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Anger	see red	qoni qaynamoq
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This classification confirms that the human being serves as one of the most important conceptual sources of figurative language.

10. The Role of Anthropocentrism in Intercultural Communication

The anthropocentric study of figurative expressions has practical significance for foreign language teaching and translation. Learners may understand the individual words of an idiom but fail to understand its figurative meaning.

For example, a learner who translates spill the beans word for word may not understand that it means “to reveal a secret.” Similarly, literal translation of Uzbek figurative expressions may result in misunderstanding for English-speaking learners.

Therefore, language teaching should introduce figurative expressions together with:

their conceptual meanings;

cultural background;

communicative situations;

pragmatic functions;

possible equivalents in the target language.

An anthropocentric approach allows learners to understand not only what an expression means but also why a particular image is used to express that meaning.

11. Discussion

The analysis indicates that figurative language is deeply rooted in human experience. The human body, emotions, cognitive processes, social interaction, and everyday activities provide speakers with conceptual models for describing abstract reality.

English and Uzbek demonstrate substantial similarities in this respect. Both languages use the head to conceptualize intelligence, the heart to conceptualize emotions, the eye to represent perception and attention, and the hand to represent activity or assistance.

However, the realization of these concepts depends on the linguistic and cultural system of each language. The same conceptual domain may be expressed through different images, and identical images may acquire different pragmatic or cultural meanings.

This confirms that figurative language is simultaneously universal and culture-specific. Its universal character is associated with shared human physiology and common cognitive mechanisms, whereas its culture-specific character results from historical experience, traditions, social practices, and national worldview. Consequently, anthropocentric analysis provides a productive methodological framework for examining the interaction of language, cognition, and culture.

Conclusion

The anthropocentric description of figurative expressions in English and Uzbek demonstrates that the human being occupies a central position in linguistic conceptualization. Figurative expressions are not accidental combinations of words; they represent the results of human perception, cognitive processing, emotional experience, and cultural interpretation.

The analysis shows that human body parts constitute one of the most productive sources of figurative meaning in both languages. The head is associated with thought and intelligence, the heart with emotions and personality, the eyes with perception and attention, and the hands with activity and assistance.

English and Uzbek share numerous universal anthropocentric conceptualizations, particularly in the domains of emotions, cognition, physical experience, and social interaction. At the same time, the two languages demonstrate considerable differences in the lexical realization of figurative

concepts. These differences are closely connected with national-cultural worldview and historical experience.

From a linguistic perspective, figurative expressions provide valuable evidence of the relationship between language and human cognition. From a cultural perspective, they reveal the values and experiences of a particular speech community. From a practical perspective, their study is essential for translation, foreign-language teaching, intercultural communication, and comparative linguistics.

Thus, the anthropocentric study of figurative expressions in English and Uzbek contributes to a deeper understanding of how human beings conceptualize reality through language and how universal cognitive mechanisms interact with culture-specific linguistic patterns.

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