

**THE HUMAN BEING AS A SOURCE OF FIGURATIVE MEANING: A
COGNITIVE AND LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH
AND UZBEK EXPRESSIONS**

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Abstract

Figurative expressions constitute an essential component of the linguistic representation of human experience. They provide speakers with effective means of expressing abstract ideas, emotions, personal characteristics, social relations, and evaluations through concrete and familiar images. The present study explores figurative expressions in English and Uzbek from cognitive and linguocultural perspectives, with particular emphasis on the anthropocentric principle. The research is based on the assumption that human experience serves as one of the primary sources of linguistic conceptualization. The analysis focuses on expressions associated with the human body, emotional states, intellectual activity, character, interpersonal relations, and human behavior. Comparative analysis reveals that English and Uzbek share a number of universal conceptual patterns, including the association of the heart with emotions, the head with intellectual activity, and the eyes with perception. At the same time, the linguistic realization of these concepts varies according to the cultural worldview of each speech community. The findings demonstrate that figurative expressions reflect both universal aspects of human cognition and culturally determined models of understanding reality. Their anthropocentric analysis therefore provides valuable insights into the relationship between language, thought, culture, and human experience.

Keywords: Anthropocentric linguistics, figurative expressions, cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, metaphor, conceptualization, English, Uzbek, human experience, linguistic worldview.

1. Introduction

One of the fundamental characteristics of natural language is its ability to represent reality not only directly but also figuratively. Human beings constantly use images, associations, comparisons, and metaphors to describe phenomena that cannot always be expressed through literal language. Figurative expressions are therefore closely connected with human cognition and the way people interpret the world.

The anthropocentric orientation of modern linguistics has considerably changed the understanding of language. Instead of examining linguistic units exclusively as elements of an autonomous system, researchers increasingly investigate them in relation to the individual who produces and interprets them. Language is consequently viewed as a reflection of human perception, knowledge, emotions, experience, and cultural identity.

Figurative expressions are especially suitable for such an analysis. A person may describe intelligence through the concept of a “head,” affection through the “heart,” attention through the “eyes,” communication through the “tongue,” and physical or social assistance through the “hand.” These associations are not random. They emerge from human bodily experience and are subsequently conventionalized within a particular language.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the anthropocentric basis of figurative expressions in English and Uzbek from cognitive and linguocultural perspectives.

The research addresses the following questions:

What role does human experience play in the formation of figurative meanings?
Which anthropocentric conceptual domains are most productive in English and Uzbek?

Which figurative concepts are universal and which are culturally specific?

How do English and Uzbek linguistically encode similar human experiences?

2. Theoretical Background

The anthropocentric approach is closely related to the development of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology. Within these approaches, language is considered a means of conceptualizing reality rather than simply a formal system of signs.

Lakoff and Johnson demonstrated that metaphor is not restricted to literary language. It is deeply embedded in everyday thinking and communication. People understand abstract concepts through more concrete domains derived from bodily and social experience.

For example, the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT explains expressions such as English boiling with anger. Similar conceptualization can be observed in Uzbek expressions involving qaynamoq (“to boil”) in descriptions of intense anger.

Likewise, the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP is represented in English by expressions such as on cloud nine and walking on air, while Uzbek uses expressions such as boshi osmonga yetmoq.

This suggests that figurative expressions represent conceptual structures rather than isolated lexical combinations.

The human body is particularly important in this process. Because individuals directly experience their bodies, bodily concepts become basic cognitive models for understanding abstract phenomena.

3. Anthropocentricity and the Human Body

The human body represents one of the most productive semantic sources of figurative expressions in both English and Uzbek.

The following body parts demonstrate especially high figurative productivity:

head → thought, intelligence, control

heart → emotion, courage, affection

eye → perception, attention, observation

ear → hearing, awareness

hand → activity, help, control

tongue → speech, communication

face → identity, social appearance

These associations are based partly on universal physiological experience. Nevertheless, individual languages develop their own phraseological patterns and cultural interpretations.

For example:

English

use your head — think intelligently;

keep an eye on someone — watch or supervise;

lend a hand — help someone;

hold your tongue — remain silent;

lose face — suffer damage to one's reputation.

Uzbek

boshini ishlatmoq — to think intelligently;

ko'z-quloq bo'lmoq — watch over someone or something;

qo'l bermoq — help or support;

tilini tiy-moq — control one's speech;

yuzi yerga qaramoq — feel ashamed or disgraced.

The examples indicate that the same human body may serve as a conceptual source in both languages while producing different figurative structures.

4. The Heart as a Cultural and Cognitive Symbol

Among body-related concepts, the heart occupies a particularly important position.

In many cultures, the heart is associated with emotions and the inner world of an individual. English expressions such as a kind heart, a broken heart, from the bottom of my heart, and take something to heart demonstrate the emotional symbolism of the heart.

Uzbek also extensively uses the concept of yurak:

yuragi keng;

yuragi toza;

yuragi ezilmoq;

yuragi orqaga tortmoq;

yuragiga yaqin olmoq.

The conceptual similarity is obvious: HEART IS THE CENTER OF EMOTION.

However, the Uzbek concept yurak may carry additional associations with courage, generosity, sensitivity, fear, and moral character.

For example, the Uzbek expression yuragi keng does not simply describe a physical characteristic. It represents generosity, tolerance, and emotional breadth.

Thus, the anthropocentric analysis of the heart reveals both universal cognition and national-cultural specificity.

5. The Head and the Concept of Intelligence

The head is another major source of figurative conceptualization.

Human beings associate the head with the brain and therefore with thinking, knowledge, memory, and decision-making.

English examples include:

to use one's head;

to have a good head for figures;

to lose one's head;

to keep one's head;

to put heads together

Uzbek examples include:

bosh qotirmoq;

boshi ishlamoq;

boshini ishlatmoq;

boshini yo‘qotmoq;

boshiga tushmoq.

The first four examples reveal close conceptual correspondence between the two languages.

The expression put heads together, for example, represents collective intellectual activity. Uzbek can express the same concept through forms such as birga maslahatlashmoq or bosh qotirmoq, depending on the context.

This demonstrates that conceptual similarity does not necessarily require identical phraseological realization

6. Eyes and the Concept of Knowledge

The relationship between sight and knowledge is another widespread anthropocentric pattern.

In English:

keep an eye on;

see the point;

open one's eyes to something;

in the public eye;

turn a blind eye.

In Uzbek

ko‘z-quloq bo‘lmoq;

ko'zi yetmoq;

ko'zini ochmoq;

ko'z o'ngida;

ko'z yumoq.

The eye is conceptually associated with knowledge because seeing is one of the primary means through which people acquire information about the surrounding world.

The metaphor can therefore be represented as:

SEEING IS KNOWING

This conceptual relationship is widespread across languages, although particular expressions and pragmatic meanings vary

7. Anthropocentric Representation of Human Emotions

Emotions are among the most frequently represented domains of figurative language. Since emotions are abstract and difficult to observe directly, speakers often describe them through bodily reactions, movement, temperature, color, space, and physical force.

7.1. Anger

English:

boiling with anger;

blow one's top;

see red

Uzbek:

qoni qaynamoq;

jahli chiqmoq;

g'azabdan qaynamoq.

The conceptual model ANGER IS HEAT is present in both languages.

7.2. Happiness

English:

on cloud nine;

walking on air;

over the moon.

Uzbek:

boshi osmonga yetmoq;

og‘zi qulog‘ida;

quvonchi ichiga sig‘maslik.

Here the dominant conceptual model is:

HAPPINESS IS UP / HAPPINESS IS EXPANSION

7.3. Sadness

English:

feel blue;

down in the dumps;

a heavy heart.

Uzbek:

ko‘ngli cho‘kmoq;

yuragi ezilmoq;

dili xira bo‘lmoq.

In these expressions, sadness is frequently conceptualized as downward movement, heaviness, or darkness.

8. Human Character as a Source of Figurative Meaning

Figurative expressions also provide a rich linguistic representation of human character.

English:

a big-hearted person;

a cold-hearted person;

a sharp-tongued person;

a hard-headed person;

a soft-hearted person.

Uzbek:

yuragi keng odam;

yuragi tosh;

tili achchiq;

o‘jar bosh;

ko‘ngli yumshoq.

These expressions demonstrate that personality is frequently described through physical qualities.

For example, “hardness” may symbolize stubbornness, while “softness” may symbolize kindness or sensitivity.

This reflects a general cognitive mechanism:

PHYSICAL PROPERTY → PSYCHOLOGICAL PROPERTY

Such conceptual transfer is one of the most productive mechanisms in figurative language.

9. Human Activity and Social Relations

The anthropocentric nature of figurative expressions is not restricted to emotions and mental activity. Human social behavior also serves as a major source of figurative conceptualization.

English:

lend a hand;

give someone a hand;

stand by someone;

break the ice;

build bridges.

Uzbek:

qo‘l bermoq;

qo‘lidan kelmoq;

yonida turmoq;

orani ochmoq;

aloqani mustahkamlash.

The hand is frequently associated with help and activity because it is one of the primary organs of human action.

Similarly, “standing beside someone” conceptually represents support and solidarity.

These expressions demonstrate that human physical experience provides a foundation for understanding abstract social relations.

10. Universal and Culture-Specific Features

A comparative analysis of English and Uzbek figurative expressions allows us to distinguish two major levels of anthropocentric conceptualization

Universal level

The following associations occur widely in both languages:

head → intelligence;

heart → emotion;

eyes → perception;

hands → activity;

tongue → speech;

physical heat → anger;

upward movement → happiness;

downward movement → sadness.

These similarities may be explained by shared human physiology and common cognitive mechanisms.

Culture-specific level

However, languages differ in the way these concepts are lexicalized and culturally interpreted.

Uzbek figurative language frequently emphasizes concepts such as:

family relationships;

respect;

hospitality;

honor;

social harmony;

patience;

interpersonal solidarity.

English figurative language may contain numerous expressions associated with: individual achievement;

professional activity;

sports;

navigation;

economic activity;

everyday institutional experience.

These differences do not mean that the underlying human emotions are fundamentally different. Rather, they demonstrate that universal human experience is interpreted through specific cultural frameworks.

11. Linguocultural Significance of Figurative Expressions

Figurative expressions represent an important component of the linguistic worldview.

The concept of the linguistic worldview refers to the way a particular speech community categorizes and interprets reality through language. Figurative

expressions preserve culturally significant information that may not be immediately visible in literal vocabulary.

For instance, Uzbek expressions containing ko'ngil are especially significant. The concept of ko'ngil can represent an individual's inner emotional world, feelings, desires, psychological state, and interpersonal attitude.

English does not always have a single lexical equivalent that covers all of these meanings. Different expressions involving heart, mind, feelings, or spirit may be required depending on the context.

This demonstrates that culturally significant concepts may be distributed differently across the semantic systems of two languages.

Consequently, comparative analysis of figurative expressions can reveal important differences in national conceptualization

12. Implications for Translation and Language Teaching

The anthropocentric study of figurative expressions is particularly important for translation.

A literal translation may preserve the lexical structure of an expression while destroying its figurative meaning.

For example, translating spill the beans word for word does not communicate its conventional meaning "to reveal a secret." The translator must identify the conceptual and pragmatic meaning and find an appropriate expression in the target language.

The same problem occurs when Uzbek figurative expressions are translated into English

Therefore, successful translation requires:

recognition of figurative meaning;

identification of the underlying conceptual metaphor;

analysis of cultural associations;

consideration of communicative context;

selection of an appropriate target-language equivalent.

The same principles are important in foreign-language teaching. Students should learn figurative expressions not as isolated vocabulary items but as culturally and cognitively motivated units.

13. Conclusion

The study of English and Uzbek figurative expressions from an anthropocentric perspective demonstrates that human beings occupy a central position in linguistic conceptualization. People use their bodies, emotions, perceptions, actions, and social experiences as basic sources for constructing figurative meanings.

The comparative analysis has shown that both English and Uzbek extensively employ body-related concepts such as the head, heart, eyes, hands, and tongue. These concepts serve as cognitive models for expressing intelligence, emotions, perception, activity, communication, and social relationships.

A number of conceptual metaphors are shared by the two languages. These include HEART IS EMOTION, HEAD IS INTELLIGENCE, SEEING IS KNOWING, ANGER IS HEAT, and HAPPINESS IS UP. Their existence in both languages points to universal aspects of human cognition and bodily experience.

At the same time, the linguistic realization of these concepts is influenced by national culture. Uzbek and English speakers may conceptualize similar experiences through different images, phraseological structures, and cultural associations. Such differences reflect the uniqueness of each language's linguistic worldview.

Therefore, figurative expressions should be regarded as an important source of information about both human cognition and national culture. Their anthropocentric analysis creates opportunities for deeper research in cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, comparative linguistics, translation studies, and intercultural communication.

Ultimately, the relationship between human experience and figurative language can be represented as:

HUMAN EXPERIENCE → COGNITIVE CONCEPTUALIZATION →
FIGURATIVE IMAGE → LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION → CULTURAL
INTERPRETATION

This model demonstrates that figurative meaning emerges at the intersection of human cognition, bodily experience, language, and culture.

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