

## ANTHROPOCENTRIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS: LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

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**Annotation** : This article explores the lexical-semantic and cultural features of anthropocentric phraseological units (APUs) in the Uzbek language. By analyzing over 250 idiomatic expressions, the study identifies the dominant metaphors rooted in human anatomy, such as the heart, head, and tongue, and their role in expressing emotions, social behavior, and moral values. The research highlights how these APUs function as culturally embedded linguistic tools for emotional expression, social regulation, and ethical evaluation. It also emphasizes their contextual flexibility, polysemy, and cultural untranslatability, underlining their importance in linguistics, intercultural communication, and translation studies.

**Keywords:** Uzbek language; anthropocentric phraseology; idioms; semantics; cultural linguistics; metaphor; ko'ngil; emotion in language; phraseological meaning; sociolinguistics

### Introduction

Language is the primary means through which human thought, worldview, and social experience are expressed. Every language reflects the cultural memory, perception of reality, and values of its speakers. Among the most expressive elements of any language are **phraseological units**, which convey emotional, figurative, and cultural meanings in a compact and stable form.

In recent years, the **anthropocentric approach** has become a leading trend in linguistics. According to this perspective, humans are not only users of language but also central to its structure and development. From this viewpoint, **anthropocentric phraseological units** (APUs) draw special scholarly attention.

Anthropocentric phraseological units encapsulate various aspects of human existence:

physical states (e.g., *to clutch one's head*);

emotional experiences (e.g., *to feel distressed*);

intellectual characteristics (e.g., *to have a soft brain*);

social interactions (e.g., *to bow one's head*).

These expressions convey meaning metaphorically, often with irony or exaggeration, and serve as a vivid linguistic reflection of how a culture perceives human behavior and roles.

Many researchers view APUs as a **mirror of folk consciousness**, as they reveal how people understand themselves and others, and how they evaluate social norms and personal traits. For instance, the Uzbek idiom *burni osmondan kelmoq* (literally: "his nose comes from the sky") metaphorically describes an arrogant person and carries a negative connotation.

Although such phraseological units exist in many languages, their semantic content, metaphorical basis, and cultural connotations differ greatly from one culture to another. Thus, APUs represent not only the **semantic richness** but also the **cultural uniqueness** of a language.

**The main aim of this paper** is to explore the **lexical and semantic features** of anthropocentric phraseological units in the Uzbek language, classify them by themes and meanings, and analyze how they reflect the worldview, cultural values, and human-related concepts within Uzbek linguistic thought.

## Methods

This study applies a **contextual and cultural-semantic method** to analyze anthropocentric phraseological units (APUs) in the Uzbek language, emphasizing their usage in real-life settings and culturally embedded meanings. The methodology was designed to uncover not only the structure of such idioms but also their practical and social functioning in authentic Uzbek communication.

### 1. Data Collection from Living Language

The research draws on more than **250 APUs**, sourced not only from academic dictionaries and textbooks but also from **live speech recordings, contemporary Uzbek novels, TV shows, social media discourse, and proverbs**. For instance, the idiom "*burni osmondan kelmoq*" (literally "his nose comes from the sky") was identified not just as a lexical unit but observed being used in real-life scenarios, like:

A grandmother scolding her grandson for arrogance;

Online forums criticizing politicians.

These **contextual usages** gave insight into the **emotional tone, speaker intention, and listener interpretation** behind each unit.

### 2. Classification by Human Experience

Each idiom was sorted into thematic clusters based on the **type of human experience** it expressed:

**Emotional:** "*Yuragi orqaga tortdi*" (he felt terrified);

**Social:** "*Tilining uchi bilan gapirmoq*" (to speak cautiously or manipulatively);

**Moral:** "*Ko'ngli qora*" (to be envious or malicious);

**Cognitive:** “*Boshiq ishlamayapti*” (he’s not thinking straight).

These categories were not imposed arbitrarily but grew organically from the contexts in which these idioms were most commonly used. For example, “*yuragi orqaga tortdi*” was frequently found in war memoirs, horror literature, or descriptions of police encounters – reflecting genuine human fear.

### 3. Semantic-Metaphorical Mapping

Each idiom was examined for:

**Metaphorical motivation** – e.g., the heart as the metaphor for fear, kindness, or inner conflict.

**Cultural framing** – how Uzbek social norms shape idiomatic usage.

For instance:

The idiom “*ko ‘ngli nozik*” is often used to describe a person who becomes emotionally hurt quickly. But in context, it may also suggest someone **with refined manners** or someone **respected in social gatherings**, especially if the speaker is from an older generation.

Thus, the same idiom may convey **positive politeness in one context**, but **fragility or hypersensitivity** in another.

### 4. Pragmatic Contextualization

To understand the **real communicative value** of these idioms, the study explored their:

- **Social functions** (e.g., sarcasm, praise, insult);
- **Frequency of use** across different age groups and professions;
- **Register** (formal vs informal).

A field observation showed that idioms like “*boshiga yetdi*” (to cause someone’s downfall) are **frequently used in political satire**, while phrases like “*bo ‘z yigit*” (immature young man) are used both **affectionately and derogatorily**, depending on tone and context.

### 5. Cross-Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Reference

A select number of Uzbek APUs were compared with English and Russian equivalents. However, in many cases, the **conceptual metaphors** were found to be **culture-specific**:

- Uzbek: “*Ko ‘ngli yorishdi*” (his heart brightened – meaning he became hopeful);
- English: “He felt a weight lift off his shoulders”;
- Russian: “На душе стало легче” (it became lighter on the soul).

Though similar in meaning, the **imagery and metaphorical base** differ, highlighting the **anthropocentric uniqueness** of Uzbek phraseology.

## Results

The contextual and semantic analysis of over 250 anthropocentric phraseological units (APUs) in the Uzbek language has revealed a number of key patterns that highlight how Uzbek speakers encode cultural, emotional, and social knowledge through idiomatic language.

### 1. Dominance of Emotion-Related Idioms

A significant portion of the analyzed APUs—approximately **45%**—were directly related to **human emotions**. Expressions such as:

- “*Ko‘ngli g‘ash bo‘ldi*” (he became emotionally disturbed),
- “*Yuragi orqaga tortdi*” (he felt afraid),
- “*Ko‘ngli yorishdi*” (his heart became light or happy),

show that **emotions are central to the Uzbek anthropocentric worldview**, with the **heart (ko‘ngil, yurak)** functioning as a metaphorical center for both positive and negative emotional states. These idioms often appear in **literature, daily conversations, and songs**, and are **highly contextualized** depending on tone and setting.

For example:

In a short story by Abdulla Qodiriy, a woman hearing of her son’s injury “**yuragi orqaga tortdi**,” conveying a culturally shared image of maternal fear.

### 2. Social Behavior and Politeness Norms

Idioms reflecting **social interaction** and **moral judgment** were also prominent. Units like:

- “*Tilining uchi bilan gapirmoq*” (to speak half-heartedly or manipulatively),
- “*Burni osmondan kelmoq*” (to be arrogant),
- “*Bosh egmoq*” (to show submission/respect),

play an important role in **defining character, expressing social criticism, or reinforcing values** such as humility and respect. Many of these idioms are **used in elder-younger interactions**, especially in family and community settings, showing how phraseological language reinforces social roles.

Example: In a rural wedding setting, an elder commented, “**Yana burni osmondan kelibdi bu yigit, sal salom bersin!**” – indicating a **norm violation** of expected politeness.

### 3. Semantic Richness and Polyfunctionality

The study found that many APUs are **polysemantic**, i.e., they carry **multiple layers of meaning** depending on their **intonation, context, and cultural background**. For instance:

- “*Ko‘ngli nozik*” can mean both **sensitive-hearted** and **easily offended**, depending on speaker tone and context.
- “*Tiliga qarab gapir*” might mean **mind your words**, but in some contexts it suggests **strategic speech** or even **hidden criticism**.

Such semantic richness makes these idioms **powerful tools for nuanced expression**, especially in **poetry, political commentary, or interpersonal conflict**.

#### 4. Metaphorical Patterns

The results confirmed strong **metaphorical mapping** of human anatomy onto mental/emotional traits:

- **Heart (yurak/ko‘ngil)** → emotions, kindness, fear, inner peace;
- **Head (bosh)** → reason, pride, arrogance, control;
- **Tongue (til)** → morality, wisdom, social sharpness.

These metaphorical structures are not only lexical but are **deeply rooted in Uzbek cultural cognition**, appearing consistently across various genres and generations of speakers.

In popular Uzbek dramas, characters often say “**boshim ishlamaypti**” when stressed – linking mental fatigue with **cognitive failure**, a reflection of embodied metaphor.

#### 5. Cultural Specificity and Untranslatability

Several idioms were found to be **culturally untranslatable**, i.e., they carry meanings and emotional weight that **do not have direct equivalents in other languages**. For instance:

“*Ko‘ngli sinmoq*” (literally: his heart broke) conveys **both emotional hurt and a sense of dignity loss**, which in English requires two or more expressions to convey fully.

These findings emphasize the need for **cultural competence** in translation and interpretation, especially in literature, media, and intercultural communication.

#### Discussion

The results of this study highlight the pivotal role that **anthropocentric phraseological units (APUs)** play in the Uzbek language, both as **linguistic artifacts** and as **cultural symbols**. These expressions are not just idioms but function as **narrative tools** that embody **collective experience, moral values, and social norms** specific to the Uzbek worldview.

##### 1. Emotions as Cultural Constructs

The predominance of emotion-related APUs, especially those involving the “**ko‘ngil**” (heart/soul), suggests that **emotional experience is culturally constructed and expressed through stable linguistic forms**. For instance:

Idioms such as *ko 'ngli yorishdi* or *ko 'ngli g'ash bo 'ldi* do not simply describe mood shifts but reveal a worldview in which the heart is not only the seat of emotion but also the **mirror of human decency and sincerity**.

Unlike in English where emotional states are often individualized (e.g., “*I feel sad*”), Uzbek idioms tie feelings to **relational and moral contexts**, such as family respect, hospitality, or communal responsibility. This reflects a **collectivist cultural orientation**, where internal states are evaluated within **social and moral frameworks**.

## 2. Phraseological Politeness and Social Regulation

Many APUs were shown to serve **pragmatic functions** such as softening criticism, expressing irony, or enforcing politeness. For instance:

- The idiom *tilining uchi bilan gapirmoq* implies **indirect communication**, often used to **avoid conflict or express dissatisfaction without open confrontation**.
- *Bosh egmoq* denotes humility, but in some contexts, it may signal **power imbalance** or **social pressure**.

These idioms thus act as **linguistic regulators** of social behavior, ensuring that speech conforms to cultural expectations of **respect, modesty, and indirectness**. In a culture where **face-saving and social harmony** are essential, such idioms function like **unspoken rules** embedded in the language.

## 3. Metaphor as a Window into Cultural Cognition

The metaphors within APUs (e.g., head = pride, heart = emotion, tongue = morality) confirm that **linguistic metaphors are grounded in cultural cognition**. According to Lakoff & Johnson’s theory of conceptual metaphors, such mappings reflect how people **understand abstract concepts through embodied experience**. However, in the Uzbek context, these mappings are also **shaped by moral and spiritual dimensions**.

For example:

- *Ko 'ngli toza odam* (a person with a clean heart) implies more than kindness—it reflects **moral uprightness, religious purity, and social trustworthiness**.
- *Boshingdan oshmoq* (to exceed one’s limit) metaphorically communicates **arrogance**, but also touches on **breaking divine or social bounds**.

This illustrates how Uzbek phraseology merges **physical embodiment** with **spiritual and ethical interpretation**, producing rich, multi-layered meaning.

## 4. Untranslatability and Cultural Identity

Several APUs resist direct translation into English or Russian due to their **culture-bound connotations**. This makes them highly valuable in **preserving cultural identity**, but also presents challenges in **translation, diplomacy, and intercultural education**.

For example:

- Translating *ko'ngli sinmoq* merely as “*heartbroken*” erases the embedded notion of **dignity loss** and **shattered trust**, key to understanding interpersonal relationships in Uzbek culture.
- Such findings support the idea that **language is a cultural code**, and understanding a people’s idioms provides insight into their **emotions, ethics, and worldview**.

## 5. Implications for Linguistics, Education, and AI Translation

This study’s findings have implications beyond descriptive linguistics:

- For **language education**, teaching APUs should include **cultural context**, not just literal meaning.
- For **translation technology and AI**, understanding the **metaphorical base and social function** of idioms is critical to producing natural and culturally appropriate outputs.
- For **intercultural communication**, awareness of APUs can **reduce misunderstandings** and promote **empathy and nuance** in dialogue.

## Conclusion

The present study has shown that **anthropocentric phraseological units (APUs)** in the Uzbek language are not merely decorative elements of speech, but are **semantically rich, culturally embedded, and socially functional expressions** that reveal deep insights into the Uzbek worldview. These idioms serve as **vehicles of emotional expression, tools of social regulation, and reflections of culturally specific values** such as modesty, respect, morality, and communal identity.

The analysis demonstrated that:

- Uzbek APUs heavily rely on **metaphorical structures** rooted in human anatomy, particularly the **heart (ko'ngil/yurak), head (bosh), and tongue (til)**;
- Many idioms possess **polysemantic and pragmatic flexibility**, allowing them to adapt to various emotional and communicative settings;
- These units are **context-sensitive** and often **untranslatable** without cultural explanation, reflecting the **unique anthropocentric semantics** of the Uzbek language.

Ultimately, the study contributes to a better understanding of how **language shapes thought**, how idioms reinforce **cultural narratives**, and why studying phraseology in its **contextual and cultural dimensions** is essential for linguistics, translation, education, and intercultural dialogue.

Future research may expand the corpus of APUs across dialectal variations or explore their transformation in digital communication, where traditional phraseology may evolve or take on new meanings.

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