

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Omonova Gulhayo Mamariza qizi

Asia international university 1st course student of master`s degree.guliomon81@gmail.com<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18661100>

Annotation. *The study examines idioms as significant linguistic units of literary discourse and analyzes them from semantic, structural, and stylistic perspectives. A comparative analysis reveals similarities and differences between English and Uzbek idiomatic expressions, highlighting their role in representing national culture and individual authorial style. The findings of the research contribute to the fields of phraseology, comparative linguistics, and literary studies.*

Key words: *idiomatic expressions, phraseology, literary discourse, comparative linguistics, stylistics.*

In the context of modern linguistics, the study of idiomatic expressions is considered one of the most relevant research areas due to their close connection with language, culture, and national worldview. Idiomatic expressions represent a significant layer of vocabulary that reflects historical experience, social relations, and cultural values of a speech community. Their interpretation in literary discourse is of particular importance, as literary texts demonstrate the most expressive and culturally marked use of language.

The concept of idiomatic expressions in linguistics

Idiomatic expressions are an essential part of any language, representing stable, figurative, and semantically unique combinations of words whose meanings cannot be fully deduced from the meanings of their individual components. In linguistics, idioms are studied under phraseology, which focuses on fixed expressions and their use in speech and literature.

Several key concepts are widely discussed in linguistic studies of idioms:

1. Expression. In linguistics, the term expression refers to any meaningful linguistic unit used to convey ideas, emotions, or intentions in communication. Expressions may appear in the form of words, phrases, clauses, or complete sentences and function as the basic tools of human interaction. Expressions operate at different levels of language. At the lexical level, expressions consist of individual words or word combinations that carry specific meanings. At the syntactic level, expressions form structured sequences governed by grammatical rules. At the pragmatic level, expressions acquire meaning depending on context, speaker intention, and communicative situation. An expression is any meaningful linguistic unit used to convey ideas or emotions.

Example: Life goes on.

This sentence functions as an expression conveying acceptance and continuity.

2. Linguistic meaning. In linguistics, linguistic meaning refers to the information and sense conveyed by linguistic units such as words, phrases, sentences, and expressions within a language system. It represents the relationship between linguistic form and the concept or idea it expresses.

Linguistic meaning is not a single-layer phenomenon; rather, it consists of several interconnected components. The most fundamental is lexical meaning, which is the inherent meaning of a word as recorded in dictionaries. For example, the word “war” lexically denotes armed conflict.

Another important component is grammatical meaning, which arises from morphological and syntactic features such as tense, number, voice, and aspect. For instance, the difference between “fight” and “fought” reflects grammatical meaning related to time.

In addition, linguistic meaning includes contextual meaning, which emerges from the specific situation in which an expression is used. The same linguistic form may convey different meanings depending on context. For example, the word “cold” may describe temperature, emotional distance, or illness depending on usage. Pragmatic meaning is closely related to speaker intention and communicative purpose. It goes beyond what is explicitly stated and involves implied meaning, politeness strategies, and speech acts. For example, the sentence “It’s cold here” may function as a request to close a window.

In the study of idiomatic expressions, linguistic meaning plays a central role because idioms often possess meanings that cannot be derived from their individual components. Their interpretation depends on shared linguistic conventions and cultural knowledge. Thus, linguistic meaning is a dynamic and multi-dimensional concept that integrates lexical, grammatical, contextual, and pragmatic elements, making it essential for understanding both everyday communication and literary discourse. Linguistic meaning refers to the sense conveyed by an expression within language.

Example: Cold war

Its linguistic meaning is not about temperature but political tension.

3. Lexical expressions. In linguistics, lexical expressions refer to words or combinations of words that carry independent lexical meaning and function as essential units of vocabulary.

They represent the core of a language’s lexicon and play a crucial role in meaning construction and communication. Lexical expressions may consist of a single word (love, war, peace) or multi-word combinations (human nature, armed conflict, deep sorrow). Unlike idiomatic expressions, the meanings of lexical expressions are generally transparent and can be inferred from the meanings of their individual components. Lexical expressions are characterized by semantic clarity and relative freedom of structure.

They can often be modified grammatically or lexically without losing their core meaning.

For example, the lexical expression “great suffering” can be transformed into “immense suffering” or “deep suffering”. In literary discourse, lexical expressions are used to describe objects, actions, emotions, and abstract concepts. Writers carefully select lexical expressions to achieve precision, emotional impact, and stylistic tone. In Ernest Hemingway’s prose, for instance, simple lexical expressions are often employed to convey complex emotions indirectly.

Lexical expressions also interact with contextual meaning. Although they are semantically transparent, their interpretation may still depend on the surrounding text or situation. For example, the lexical expression “cold heart” may shift from a literal to a metaphorical meaning in a literary context. From a linguistic perspective, the study of lexical expressions contributes to understanding vocabulary development, semantic relations, and stylistic variation. They form the foundation upon which more complex linguistic units, such as idiomatic and phraseological expressions, are built. In contrast to idiomatic expressions, lexical expressions are easier to translate across languages, as their meanings are more directly transferable. However, cultural and stylistic factors may still influence translation choices. A lexical expression consists of one or more words with a specific lexical meaning.

Example: War, Love story

Both are lexical expressions commonly used in literary texts.

4. Phraseological unit. In linguistics, a phraseological unit is a stable combination of two or more words that functions as a single semantic whole. Unlike free word combinations, phraseological units are characterized by semantic unity, structural stability, and reproducibility in speech and writing. The meaning of a phraseological unit is often figurative and cannot be fully deduced from the meanings of its individual components. This feature distinguishes phraseological units from ordinary lexical expressions.

For example, the phraseological unit “spill the beans” means “to reveal a secret” rather than literally spilling beans. One of the main features of phraseological units is fixedness. The components of a phraseological unit usually cannot be replaced or rearranged without losing or distorting its meaning. For instance, in the expression “once in a blue moon,” changing any element results in the loss of idiomatic meaning.

Phraseological units may vary in their degree of semantic transparency. Some are transparent, where the figurative meaning is relatively easy to understand, while others are opaque, requiring cultural or historical knowledge for proper interpretation. This distinction is particularly important in translation studies. From a functional perspective, phraseological units serve important stylistic and expressive roles.

They enrich language, add emotional coloring, and reflect cultural values. In literary texts, authors use phraseological units to convey character traits, social background, and emotional states. Phraseological units are commonly classified into different types, including idioms, collocations, proverbs, and set expressions. Each type has specific linguistic features but shares the common properties of stability and reproducibility.

In comparative linguistics, phraseological units are valuable for analyzing cultural and linguistic differences between languages. English and Uzbek phraseological units often differ in imagery and structure, which presents challenges for interpretation and translation. A phraseological unit is a stable word combination with a fixed meaning.

Example: By and large

Meaning: generally

5. Idiomatic expression. In linguistics, idiomatic expressions are fixed or semi-fixed combinations of words whose overall meaning is figurative and cannot be fully inferred from the literal meanings of their individual components. Idioms represent a significant part of a language’s phraseological system and reflect cultural, historical, and cognitive aspects of a speech community. One of the defining characteristics of idiomatic expressions is semantic opacity. The meaning of an idiom often differs from the meanings of its constituent words. For example, the idiom “kick the bucket” means “to die,” and its meaning cannot be derived from the literal interpretation of the words kick and bucket.

Idiomatic expressions also demonstrate a high degree of structural fixedness. Their lexical components and word order are usually stable, and any modification may result in the loss of idiomatic meaning. For instance, altering the structure of “once in a blue moon” leads to semantic distortion. From a semantic perspective, idiomatic expressions may vary in transparency. Some idioms are partially transparent, allowing limited interpretation based on imagery, while others are fully opaque and require cultural knowledge for understanding. This distinction is particularly important in translation and contrastive linguistics.

In literary discourse, idiomatic expressions serve important stylistic and expressive functions. Writers employ idioms to create natural dialogue, convey emotions, and reveal characters’ social and cultural backgrounds.

In Ernest Hemingway's works, idiomatic expressions often contribute to simplicity of style while carrying deep emotional and symbolic meanings. Idiomatic expressions are closely connected with culture and cognition. Cognitive linguistics views idioms as reflections of conceptual metaphors and shared mental models within a community.

As a result, idioms often differ significantly across languages, even when they express similar ideas. In comparative studies of English and Uzbek, idiomatic expressions reveal both universal human experiences and culture-specific imagery. This makes idioms a challenging but valuable area of study in linguistics and translation studies. An idiomatic expression has a figurative meaning that differs from the literal interpretation.

Example: Kick the bucket

Meaning: to die.

Conclusion. This article has examined the theoretical foundations of idiomatic expressions in linguistics, highlighting their essential role in language structure and communication. The analysis has shown that idiomatic expressions represent stable, figurative, and non-compositional language units whose meanings cannot be fully derived from their individual components.

Idiomatic expressions are a crucial component of any natural language, representing a complex interaction of semantic, structural, cognitive, functional, stylistic, and cultural elements.

The theoretical foundations of idiomatic expressions provide the framework for understanding, analyzing, and teaching idioms, as well as for literary analysis and translation studies.

Used literature

1. Lyons, J. Linguistic Semantics. Cambridge University Press
2. Vinogradov, V. V. Lexicology and Phraseology. Moscow.
3. Kunin, A. V. English Phraseology. Moscow: Higher School Publish
4. Rahmatullaev, Sh. O'zbek Tilining Frazologik Lug'ati. Tashkent.
5. Hojiyev, A. Tilshunoslik Terminlarining Izohli Lug'ati. Tashkent.
6. Yoqubov, A. O'zbek Frazologiyasi Masalalari. Tashkent.
7. Saidova, M. Frazologik Birliklarning Lingvistik Tahlili. Tashkent.
8. Yusupov, U. Comparative Linguistics. Tashkent.