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LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract
This article examines the linguocultural features of English phraseological units and their relevance to English teacher education. Through descriptive analysis and selected English–Uzbek comparisons, it explores figurative imagery, cultural connotations, interpersonal evaluations, and contextual appropriateness. The discussion illustrates how idiomatic meanings depend on conventional associations and communicative situations rather than literal interpretation alone. It also considers translation choices and proposes classroom activities involving contextual reading, comparison, paraphrasing, and guided production. The article argues that integrating linguistic and cultural analysis can help prospective teachers explain phraseological meaning, address stereotypes critically, and develop learners' intercultural awareness alongside practical vocabulary knowledge.

Keywords: Phraseological units, linguocultural features, idiomatic meaning, cultural connotation, figurative imagery, intercultural competence, English teacher education.

Introduction

English phraseological units offer valuable evidence of how language preserves cultural experience and shapes everyday communication. Expressions such as "break the ice," "a storm in a teacup," and "keep a stiff upper lip" communicate meanings that cannot be understood adequately through individual words alone. Their interpretation depends on conventional imagery, social expectations, and the situations in which speakers use them. Consequently, phraseology deserves attention within the preparation of English teachers at pedagogical universities in Uzbekistan.

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A linguocultural approach examines the relationship between stable expressions, shared knowledge, and culturally meaningful evaluations. Ashurova and Galieva (2019) place phraseological research within the broader investigation of language and culture, while Safarov (2006) provides a cognitive foundation for considering how linguistic meaning relates to conceptual knowledge. These perspectives help explain why grammatical accuracy does not automatically ensure appropriate idiomatic communication.

This article discusses selected English phraseological units through descriptive interpretation and comparison with Uzbek expressions. It considers figurative motivation, cultural connotation, contextual appropriateness, and translation choices. The discussion also proposes classroom activities suitable for English education students. Its purpose is to show how studying phraseology can connect vocabulary development with intercultural awareness and prepare prospective teachers to explain idiomatic meaning accurately and sensitively to learners.

Main part

Phraseological units are stable combinations whose conventional meanings and patterns of use require recognition as expressions. Their cultural significance may emerge through imagery, associations, evaluation, or communicative function. However, an expression should not automatically be treated as evidence of a fixed national character. English circulates across diverse communities, and speakers differ in their familiarity with particular idioms. Cultural interpretation therefore needs contextual evidence and attention to variation.

Figurative imagery provides an accessible starting point. “Break the ice” presents initial social difficulty as a barrier that can be removed, making it useful when discussing introductions and classroom interaction. “A storm in a teacup” evaluates a reaction as excessive in relation to a minor problem. The teacup image makes the contrast memorable, but teachers should avoid presenting a speculative origin as an established historical fact. Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen (2005) demonstrate the importance of cultural knowledge for understanding conventional figurative language.

Other expressions carry interpersonal evaluations. “Keep a stiff upper lip” associates emotional restraint with maintaining composure under difficulty. Its

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interpretation can involve admiration, irony, or criticism, depending on the speaker and situation. It should therefore be discussed as a culturally recognizable expression rather than a description of every British person. Similarly, "save face" concerns protecting social reputation, a communicative concern that extends beyond any single English-speaking society. Such examples encourage students to distinguish cultural associations from stereotypes.

Comparison with Uzbek can reveal both shared meanings and different images. English "make a mountain out of a molehill" and Uzbek "pashshadan fil yasamoq" express exaggeration through contrasting sizes, although their literal components differ. This comparison illustrates functional similarity without requiring identical wording. Rahmatullayev's (1978) phraseological dictionary offers a foundation for checking Uzbek meanings and usage. Students should compare complete contexts because apparently equivalent expressions may differ in register, emotional intensity, or grammatical behaviour.

Translation activities can develop this awareness. Learners may first identify an expression's contextual meaning, then consider an Uzbek idiom, a descriptive paraphrase, or a brief explanation. For instance, translating "spill the beans" requires conveying disclosure of a secret rather than reproducing the food image mechanically. The most suitable choice depends on audience, purpose, and tone. Mahmudov's (2012) discussion of language and culture provides a relevant theoretical context for examining these relationships without reducing meaning to dictionary substitution.

For prospective teachers, instruction can combine contextual reading, comparison, and guided production. Students can examine short dialogues, identify speakers' intentions, and explain why an idiom suits a particular exchange. They can then prepare paired English and Uzbek examples and teach them through brief classroom demonstrations. Assessment should consider meaning, register, contextual suitability, and clarity of explanation. Reflection tasks can ask students whether their interpretation rests on observable usage or an unsupported cultural assumption. These activities make phraseological competence a practical component of teacher education and provide opportunities to integrate linguistic analysis with thoughtful intercultural communication. Teachers can also invite alternative paraphrases, helping learners recognize that

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successful understanding does not always require an exact idiomatic equivalent in another language or a single acceptable translation.

Conclusion

The linguocultural study of English phraseological units connects figurative meaning with shared knowledge, social evaluation, and communicative context. Expressions show how familiar images can express attitudes toward emotion, reputation, exaggeration, and interpersonal relationships. Their cultural relevance becomes clearer when interpretation considers actual usage and avoids broad claims about national character.

For English education students at pedagogical universities in Uzbekistan, comparison with Uzbek phraseology can make these relationships more accessible. Similar communicative meanings may appear through different images, while similar wording may conceal differences in tone or appropriateness. Teaching should therefore combine contextual interpretation, careful comparison, translation alternatives, and guided classroom practice.

The proposed approach supports vocabulary learning alongside intercultural sensitivity and professional judgment. Future teachers can use it to explain idioms accurately, select suitable examples, and encourage learners to evaluate cultural assumptions critically. Further classroom research could examine how these activities influence idiom comprehension, retention, and appropriate use over time.

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