



THE SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS EXPRESSING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHARACTER TRAITS IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This article explores the semantic features of Uzbek phraseological units used to express positive and negative character traits. Through the analysis of structural forms, metaphorical components, and cultural meanings, the study demonstrates how these expressions embody the moral and psychological worldview of Uzbek speakers.

Keywords: Phraseology, semantics, idiom, character traits, Uzbek language, culture, metaphor

Introduction

Phraseological units play an important role in the enrichment of any language, as they encapsulate the cultural, emotional, and social experiences of a nation. In the Uzbek language, phraseological expressions (or frazemalar) serve not only a linguistic function but also a cultural and psychological one, often reflecting human behavior, emotions, and character traits.

Among the various semantic groups of phraseological units, those that describe positive and negative character traits are particularly significant. These expressions are commonly used in everyday speech, literature, folklore, and proverbs, contributing to the depiction of personality types and social judgments. This thesis aims to conduct a semantic analysis of Uzbek phraseological units that convey positive (e.g., kindness, bravery, wisdom) and negative (e.g., cowardice,



stinginess, deceitfulness) traits. The research explores their structure, meaning, metaphorical basis, and cultural background.

Phraseological units (frazemalar) are stable, non-compositional expressions consisting of two or more words that function as a single semantic entity. These units often cannot be understood by translating each word separately, as their meanings are figurative and context-dependent. According to linguist A.V. Kunin, a phraseological unit is “a stable combination of words with partially or fully figurative meaning”. In Uzbek, examples include expressions like “ko‘ngli keng” (generous-hearted) or “yuragi tor” (narrow-hearted/stingy). Phraseologisms are unique because they:

- Express connotative meaning (e.g., emotional or evaluative meaning);
- Reflect social judgments (e.g., approval or disapproval);
- Are often metaphorical, drawing on imagery from nature, animals, objects, or body parts;
- Display semantic integrity, meaning the unit functions as a whole.

For example: “Yuragi keng” – literally “heart is wide” → means kind, generous; “Ko‘zini shamollatmoq” – literally “to let cold air into one's eyes” → means to cry excessively.

Based on semantic meaning, phraseological units can be classified into:

➤ Positive character traits:

- Yuragi toza – pure-hearted
- Ko‘ngli ochiq – open-hearted/friendly
- Eli bilan el bo‘lmoq – to live in harmony with others

➤ Negative character traits:

- Tilida asal, ko‘nglida g‘as – sweet words but malicious inside
- Yuragi qora – black-hearted/evil
- Ko‘ngli qora – envious or unkind

These expressions often rely on symbolic oppositions (e.g., white vs. black, open vs. narrow, clean vs. dirty), which reflect moral and cultural judgments within the Uzbek community.

Many phraseological units are rooted in cultural traditions, religion, national values, and collective psychology. For instance:



- “Yuzidan nur yog‘ilmoq” (light shining from the face) indicates goodness and purity, often associated with spiritual or religious ideals.

- “Ko‘ngli qorong‘i” (dark-hearted) reflects social mistrust or pessimism.

Understanding these expressions requires knowledge of not just language, but also cultural metaphors and value systems in Uzbek society.

Languages reflect the values of the society that speaks them. In Uzbek culture, positive character traits such as kindness, honesty, bravery, modesty, and generosity are highly appreciated. These values are deeply embedded in phraseological expressions used in everyday speech, literature, and oral tradition. Phraseological units help reinforce these traits by attributing them to ideal human behavior. For instance, phrases like “ko‘ngli ochiq” (open-hearted) and “el bilan el bo‘lmoq” (to be one with the people) highlight collective and moral ideals upheld in Uzbek culture.

Phraseological units that describe positive character traits can be grouped into several thematic categories:

A) Generosity and Kindness

- Ko‘ngli keng – literally “heart is wide”; means generous and tolerant

- Yuragi toza – “heart is clean”; pure-hearted, sincere

- Qo‘li ochiq – “open-handed”; generous with money or help

These expressions often refer to heart, hands, and eyes — symbolic body parts in Uzbek phraseology associated with emotion, will, and perception.

B) Honesty and Modesty

- Gapida halollik bor – “there is honesty in his words”

- Boshi egik, ko‘ngli toza – “head is bowed, heart is pure”

- O‘zini past tutmoq – “to keep oneself low”; modest, humble

These idioms show that humility is associated with moral integrity in Uzbek culture.

C) Bravery and Dignity

- Ko‘ksini qalqon qilmoq – “make one’s chest a shield”; to show bravery

- Or-nomusi bor – “has honor and dignity”

- Yigitlik gapi – “man’s word”; trustworthy promise



Uzbek phraseological units exhibit several semantic features when expressing positive traits:

- **Connotative meaning:** Beyond the literal words, the phrase evokes respect and admiration.
- **Figurative language:** Symbolism is common; for example, *yorug' yuzli* (bright-faced) implies both literal brightness and inner virtue.
- **Emotive tone:** Many expressions are emotionally loaded, used to praise or elevate someone's behavior.

Example: “Ko‘ngli toza inson” – "A pure-hearted person" → Conveys emotional purity, kindness, and sincerity. → Associated metaphor: *toza* (clean) = morally untainted.

These phraseological expressions often follow recurring syntactic and morphological patterns (table 1):

Table 1. Structural Patterns of Positive Phraseological Units

Structure Type	Example	Translation
Noun + Adjective	Ko‘ngli keng	Generous-hearted
Verb + Object	Elga xizmat qilmoq	Serve the people
Prepositional phrase	Ko‘nglida nur bor	Has light in the heart
Verb + Complement	Yaxshi niyatda bo‘lmoq	Be of good intention

Positive phraseologisms are strongly tied to Uzbek social norms and expectations. For example:

- Generosity is linked to hospitality — “Qo‘li ochiq mehmonnavoz” (generous host).
- Honor and dignity are linked to masculinity and tradition — “Er yigit gapida turadi” (A man keeps his word).
- Purity of heart and kindness are often attributed to mothers or wise elders — “Ko‘ngli quyoshdek nur sochadi” (Her heart shines like the sun).

These expressions function not only as linguistic tools but also as moral guidance, shaping social behavior and identity. Phraseological units expressing positive traits are widely used in:



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- ✓ Public speeches to praise individuals;
 - ✓ Literature to build character;
 - ✓ Proverbs and folk tales to teach values;
 - ✓ Everyday language to show respect or gratitude.

Examples in Context: “U haqiqiy ko‘ngli keng inson ekan”. – “He is truly a generous-hearted person”; “Gapida halollik bor, ishonchli yigit” – “There is honesty in his words, he is a trustworthy man”; “Mehmonni ko‘ngli bilan kutdi” – “He welcomed the guest with his heart.”

Thus, such positive traits as generosity, honesty, modesty, and bravery are richly expressed in Uzbek phraseological units. These expressions are built on cultural metaphors and frequently use symbolic body parts (heart, hand, chest). Semantically, they reflect social ideals and cultural values that define the Uzbek worldview. Their structural and stylistic patterns are deeply embedded in both oral and written Uzbek discourse. In every language, certain behaviors are socially disapproved and thus expressed through negative evaluative phraseological units. In the Uzbek language, such units convey attributes like deceitfulness, arrogance, laziness, stinginess, cowardice, and hypocrisy. These phraseological expressions reflect not only disapproval but often carry deep cultural warnings about immoral or anti-social behavior.

Phraseologisms that describe negative traits serve both descriptive and corrective purposes: they identify undesired behavior and indirectly discourage it. Uzbek negative phraseological units can be categorized into semantic groups:

A) Greed and Stinginess

- Ko‘zi ochilmagan – literally: “his eyes have not opened”; means stingy, greedy
- Qo‘li tor – “tight-handed”; not generous
- Ochko‘z bo‘lmoq – “to be gluttonous”; excessive desire for food or wealth

B) Laziness and Irresponsibility

- Qo‘lini sovuq suvga urmas – “does not dip his hand into cold water”; extremely lazy
- Boshqa yukni boshiga ortmoq – “puts his burden on others”; avoids responsibility

C) Cowardice and Weakness

- Yuragi po‘stak – “heart like a husk”; coward



- So‘zida turmaydi – “does not keep his word”; unreliable, weak-willed

D) Deceit and Hypocrisy

- Tilida asal, ko‘nglida g‘as – “honey on the tongue, venom in the heart”

- Ikki yuzli odam – “two-faced person”

- Ko‘zbo‘yamachi – “eyewasher”; pretender, fake do-gooder

E) Pride and Arrogance

- Burni osmondan tushmaydi – “his nose never comes down from the sky”; arrogant

- O‘zini ko‘rsatmoq – “to show off”

- O‘zini bilmasdan yurmoq – “acts without knowing himself”; unaware of own limits

These expressions often rely on figurative language and metaphor to sharpen criticism. Key semantic features include: Metaphorical extension: Expressions like “ko‘zi ochilmagan” metaphorically imply greed by referencing blindness to others’ needs; Negative connotation: Words like “qora, po‘stak”, or “yopiq” often convey evil, emptiness, or deception; Symbolic imagery: Arrogance = high nose; stinginess = tight hand; hypocrisy = sweet tongue + dark heart. **Example:** “Tilida asal, ko‘nglida g‘as”; **Literal:** “Honey on the tongue, venom in the heart”; **Meaning:** Someone who speaks kindly but hides evil intentions. This idiom contains clear symbolic oppositions: sweet vs. bitter, visible vs. hidden, speech vs. intention.

Like positive idioms, negative ones also follow regular structures in Uzbek (table 2):

Table 2. Structural Patterns of Negative Phraseological Units

Structural Pattern	Example	Meaning
Adjective + Noun	Ko‘zi ochilmagan	Greedy
Noun + Adjective	Yuragi qora	Evil-hearted
Verb phrase	Boshqa yukni ortmoq	Avoiding responsibility
Complex sentence	Tilida asal, ko‘nglida g‘as	Hypocrite



Uzbek negative phraseologisms are more than linguistic devices — they are carriers of cultural norms and moral lessons. Many such expressions are:

- Found in maqollar (proverbs);
- Used by elders and teachers to scold or correct behavior;
- Rich in Islamic and traditional values, such as truthfulness, humility, and social responsibility.

Examples: “Burni osmondan tushmaydigan odam ko‘p yiqiladi” (“The one whose nose never drops from the sky falls more often.”); → Pride leads to downfall — a moral lesson. “Qo‘li tor odamning duosi ham tor bo‘ladi” (“A stingy man’s prayer is also narrow.”) → Generosity is tied to moral worth and spirituality.

These expressions are commonly used in:

- Family and interpersonal conversations to correct or shame behavior;
- Proverbs and literature to develop negative characters;
- Mass media and politics to criticize public figures.

Examples in Context: “U ikki yuzli odam ekan, menga boshqacha gapiribdi” → “He is two-faced, he told me something different”; “Yuragi qora odam bilan maslahat qilishdan foyda yo‘q” → “There is no use consulting someone with a black heart”.

Thus, such Uzbek phraseological units express a wide range of negative traits through rich metaphorical and symbolic imagery. Common targets of criticism include greed, hypocrisy, arrogance, laziness, and cowardice. These idioms reflect social norms, cultural values, and serve as tools of moral correction. Structurally, they resemble positive idioms but are loaded with negative connotations and often harsher imagery.

Phraseological units serve as a powerful linguistic tool to reflect not only individual character traits but also the collective worldview of a nation. In the Uzbek language, phraseologisms are used extensively to express both positive (generosity, bravery, honesty) and negative (cowardice, greed, hypocrisy) character traits.

This article analyzed the semantic structure, metaphorical foundations, and cultural significance of these expressions. The study showed that:



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- Positive phraseological units often include symbols like “heart,” “light,” or “open hands,” associated with goodness and kindness;
 - Negative units rely on contrasting symbols such as “black,” “closed,” or “bitter,” reflecting negative social behavior;
 - Phraseologisms are metaphorical, emotive, and culturally embedded;
 - Their meanings cannot be understood literally but require contextual and cultural awareness.

Thus, phraseological expressions are not only linguistic phenomena but cultural signifiers. Their analysis offers insight into the moral values and psychology of the Uzbek people. The findings are useful for linguists, translators, teachers, and cultural researchers.

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