



SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK IDIOMS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the syntactic structures of idioms in English and Uzbek, two languages from different language families. Through a comparative analysis of 200 idioms from each language, we investigate the similarities and differences in idiomatic constructions, focusing on their internal syntax and integration into larger syntactic structures. Results indicate both shared and language-specific syntactic features in idiomatic expressions, reflecting the broader grammatical structures of each language. English idioms demonstrate more syntactic flexibility, while Uzbek idioms adhere more strictly to the language's SOV structure. This comparative approach provides insights into the interface between idiomaticity and syntax across linguistically distant languages, contributing to our understanding of universal and language-specific aspects of phraseology.

KEYWORDS: Idioms, syntax, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics, phraseology, cross-linguistic analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Idioms, as fixed multi-word expressions with non-compositional meanings, present a unique challenge in linguistic analysis. While their semantic opacity has been extensively studied (Gibbs, 1994; Cacciari & Tabossi, 2014), the syntactic behavior of idioms offers valuable insights into the interplay between lexicalized phrases and productive grammar (Nunberg et al., 1994). This study aims to compare the syntactic structures of idioms in English, a Germanic language, and Uzbek, a Turkic language, to uncover both universal and language-specific patterns in idiomatic constructions.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to illuminate how languages with different typological features construct and use idiomatic expressions. English, with its SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) structure and reliance on word order and prepositions, contrasts sharply with Uzbek, which follows an SOV structure and employs an extensive case system and postpositions (Bektemirov & Yusupov, 2018). By examining how these fundamental differences manifest in idiomatic expressions, we can gain insights into the deeper relationships between a language's core syntax and its phraseological units.

Research questions guiding this study include:

1. What are the predominant syntactic structures of idioms in English and Uzbek?
2. How do the typological differences between English and Uzbek influence the formation and behavior of idioms in each language?



3. To what extent do idioms in these languages reflect or deviate from the canonical word order and syntactic patterns of their respective languages?

METHODS

2.1 Corpus Selection

A corpus of 200 idioms from each language was compiled for this study. The English idioms were selected from the Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms (Ayto, 2010) and the Collins COBUILD Idioms Dictionary (2012). Uzbek idioms were sourced from the Phraseological Dictionary of the Uzbek Language (Sh. Rakhmatullayev) and supplemented with idioms from contemporary Uzbek literature and media.

Selection criteria included:

- Frequency of use (based on corpus data for English and native speaker consultation for Uzbek)
- Structural diversity (to ensure representation of various syntactic patterns)
- Exclusion of proverbs and sayings (focus on phrasal idioms)

2.2 Syntactic Classification Criteria

Idioms were classified based on:

1. Syntactic head (verb-centered, noun-centered, etc.)
2. Internal structure (e.g., Verb + Object, Adjective + Noun)
3. Grammatical function in sentences (e.g., predicate, modifier)

2.3 Analysis Procedures

1. Each idiom was parsed to identify its constituent parts and internal structure.
2. Idioms were categorized based on their syntactic patterns.
3. A comparative analysis was conducted to identify similarities and differences between English and Uzbek idiomatic structures.
4. Native speaker consultations were used to verify the grammaticality and variability of idiomatic constructions, particularly for Uzbek.

RESULTS

3.1 Syntactic Patterns in English Idioms

English idioms displayed the following predominant structures:

1. Verb Phrase Idioms (40%):
 - Verb + Object: "kick the bucket", "spill the beans"
 - Verb + Preposition + Object: "look up to someone", "get over something"
2. Noun Phrase Idioms (30%):
 - Adjective + Noun: "cold feet", "hot potato"
 - Noun + Preposition + Noun: "piece of cake", "bird in hand"
3. Prepositional Phrase Idioms (20%):
 - Preposition + Noun: "in a nutshell", "on the fence"
4. Clausal Idioms (10%):
 - Full clauses: "when pigs fly", "the plot thickens"

3.2 Syntactic Patterns in Uzbek Idioms

Uzbek idioms exhibited these primary structures:

1. Verb Phrase Idioms (45%):
 - Object + Verb: "boshini qotirmoq" (lit. "to harden one's head", meaning "to puzzle")
 - Noun + Verb: "ko'ngli cho'kmoq" (lit. "heart to sink", meaning "to feel depressed")
2. Noun Phrase Idioms (35%):



- Adjective + Noun: "issiq qon" (lit. "hot blood", meaning "passionate person")
 - Noun + Noun (in possessive construction): "ko'z nuri" (lit. "light of eye", meaning "beloved")
 - 3. Postpositional Phrase Idioms (15%):
 - Noun + Postposition: "ko'z oldida" (lit. "in front of eye", meaning "clearly visible")
 - 4. Clausal Idioms (5%):
 - Full clauses: "tuyaning dumi yerga tekkanda" (lit. "when a camel's tail touches the ground", equivalent to "when pigs fly")
- 3.3 Comparative Analysis

Table illustrates the structural similarities and differences between English and Uzbek idioms:

Syntctic structure	English example	English gloss	Uzbek example	Uzbek gloss
Verb+object	Kick the bucket	Verb+det+noun	Jonini olmoq	Object- verb
Adj+noun	Cold feet	Adj+noun	Katta og'iz	Adj+noun
Prep+noun	Under the weather	Prep+det+noun	Ko'zi oldida	Noun+ postposition
Verb+prep+noun	Jump on the bandwagon	Verb+prep+det+noun	Qo'l siltamoq	Noun+verb
Noun+verb	Time flies	Noun+verb	Aqli yetmoq	Noun+verb
Clausal idioms	When pigs fly	Sub.clause	Tuyani dumi yerga tekkanda	Subordinating clause

Key findings from the comparative analysis include:

1. Word Order: English idioms follow SVO structure, while Uzbek adheres to SOV.
2. Prepositional Elements: English uses prepositions, Uzbek employs postpositions or case markers.
3. Verb Forms: English often uses simple present or infinitive; Uzbek frequently uses infinitive or possessive forms.
4. Noun Inflections: English nouns are typically uninflected in idioms; Uzbek nouns often carry possessive or case markers.
5. Syntactic Flexibility: English idioms generally allow more syntactic operations (e.g., passivization) compared to Uzbek idioms.

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis of English and Uzbek idiomatic structures reveals that while idioms in both languages share some universal features, they are significantly shaped by the syntactic

characteristics of their respective languages. English idioms, with their SVO structure and prepositional elements, contrast with Uzbek idioms, which adhere to SOV order and utilize postpositions and case markers.

These findings contribute to our understanding of how deeply entrenched linguistic structures shape even seemingly frozen expressions like idioms. The study underscores the importance of considering typological differences in phraseological research and has implications for language teaching, translation studies, and cognitive linguistics.

As research in this field progresses, we can expect to gain even deeper insights into the nature of idiomatic expressions and their place at the intersection of lexicon and syntax across the world's languages.

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