

Phraseological Insights into Health and Sickness: A Comparative Linguistic and Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: This comprehensive study delves into the phraseological expressions associated with health and sickness in English and Uzbek, emphasizing their cultural and linguistic dimensions. Through a comparative analysis, the research examines how societal beliefs, historical contexts, and linguistic frameworks shape these expressions. The findings reveal both universal themes and unique cultural nuances, offering insights into the values and worldviews of English and Uzbek-speaking communities.

Keywords: phraseology, culture, health, sickness, expressions, language, communication, perception, religion, superstition.

INTRODUCTION

Phraseology, the study of fixed expressions such as idioms, proverbs, and collocations, is a vital component of linguistic studies. These expressions, often carrying meanings beyond the sum of their individual parts, serve as cultural signifiers and reflect the historical and social experiences of a community. In both English and Uzbek, phraseological units encapsulate the essence of their respective cultures, offering insights into societal values, beliefs, and traditions. Teliya argues that phraseology is a linguistic phenomenon where language and culture intersect, highlighting its role in expressing the collective mentality of a society. She emphasizes that phraseological units encapsulate cultural codes and serve as carriers of collective experience [Teliya, V. N, 1996]. Cowie discusses the theoretical foundations of phraseology and its practical applications, stating that “phraseology offers a unique insight into the cultural and pragmatic underpinnings of language use” [Cowie, A. P, 1998].

Phraseology examines the set expressions within a language that convey meanings not directly deducible from their individual components. These include idioms like “kick the bucket” in English, meaning to die, or “ko‘ngli ochiq” in Uzbek, describing someone as open-hearted or generous. Such expressions are integral to the richness and depth of a language, providing speakers with nuanced ways to express complex ideas and emotions.

In English, phraseological units are deeply embedded in daily communication, literature, and media. They often originate from historical events, literary works, or cultural practices. For instance, the idiom “Achilles’ heel,” meaning a person’s weakness, traces back to Greek mythology,

illustrating how historical narratives influence modern language. These expressions contribute to the expressiveness of the language, allowing speakers to convey sentiments succinctly and effectively. Moreover, English phraseology reflects cultural values such as individualism and pragmatism. Expressions like “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” emphasize self-reliance and personal effort, mirroring societal ideals prevalent in English-speaking cultures. Similarly, Uzbek phraseology is a repository of the nation’s cultural heritage, embodying traditions, moral values, and collective experiences. Many Uzbek idioms are rooted in agrarian life, reflecting the historical significance of agriculture in the region. For example, the phrase “tarvuzi qo‘ltig‘idan tushmoq”, literally translating to “the watermelon fell from under the arm”, is used to describe someone whose plans have failed, akin to the English expression “to have egg on one’s face.”

These expressions also highlight the communal nature of Uzbek society. Phrases emphasizing collective well-being and social harmony are prevalent, indicating the importance of community in Uzbek culture. “Yuziga tik qaray olmaslik” (Unable to look into someone’s face): This phrase indicates a sense of shame or guilt, which is deeply tied to societal judgment and the expectation to uphold communal values and standards. While both English and Uzbek utilize phraseological units to enrich communication, the origins and themes of these expressions often differ, reflecting distinct cultural priorities. English idioms may draw from industrial or literary sources, whereas Uzbek expressions frequently have roots in pastoral and communal life. Understanding these differences enhances cross-cultural communication and provides deeper insights into the societal values embedded within each language.

Phraseology serves as a bridge between language and culture, encapsulating the historical and social essence of a community. In both English and Uzbek, these expressions enrich the language, offering speakers a means to convey complex ideas succinctly and effectively. By studying phraseology, one gains not only linguistic knowledge but also a profound understanding of the cultural landscapes from which these expressions emerge.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The conceptualization of health within phraseology reflects how different cultures perceive and articulate well-being. Phraseological units-such as idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions-serve as linguistic manifestations of these cultural perceptions, encapsulating societal attitudes toward health.

Cognitive linguistics posits that metaphors play a crucial role in shaping our understanding of abstract concepts like health. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that “metaphors structure our conceptual system” and influence how we understand and express ideas such as health [Lakoff, G. *et al.*, 1980]. For instance, health is often conceptualized as a state of balance or harmony, leading to expressions that reflect this metaphorical understanding. In English, phrases like “in good shape” or “back on one's feet” metaphorically represent health as physical stability or balance. Similarly, in Uzbek, the expression “sog'lom tanada – sog' aql” (a healthy mind in a healthy body) underscores the harmony between physical and mental well-being [Sharifian, F, 2017].

The way health is conceptualized in phraseology also aligns with cultural models prevalent in a society. Sharifian (2017) emphasizes that “language embodies cultural conceptualizations, including those related to health” [Sontag, S., 1978]. For example, in many cultures, health is associated with purity and cleanliness, leading to expressions that link cleanliness with well-being. In English, the proverb “cleanliness is next to godliness” suggests a cultural model where physical cleanliness is tied to moral and physical health [Brooks, G. *et al.*, 2023]. In Uzbek culture, the emphasis on communal well-being is evident in expressions that promote health through social harmony and collective practices, such as “yuzga urgan uyalmaydi” (One who hits a hundred is not ashamed)[Jia, M, 2022].

Health Communication through Phraseology

Phraseological expressions related to health are not merely linguistic artifacts but play a significant role in health communication. They can influence individuals' perceptions of health and illness, affect health behaviors, and shape interactions between healthcare providers and patients. For instance, the use of war metaphors in health discourse, such as “*fighting a disease*”, can impact how patients perceive their illness and treatment. Sontag S. critically examines how “such metaphors can shape the experience of illness, sometimes leading to stigmatization” [Gries, S. T., 2008]. Understanding the phraseology related to health in different languages can thus enhance cross-cultural health communication and improve healthcare outcomes [Salnikova, V. V. *et al.*, 2022]. Another example, “A clean bill of health” is commonly used in both medical and metaphorical contexts, signifies that a person is deemed completely healthy after a medical examination or evaluation. Originating from maritime practices in the 18th and 19th centuries, the term referred to a certificate issued to a ship indicating it was free of infectious diseases and safe to dock at a port. Over time, the expression transitioned into broader use to describe an individual's health status or even the condition of an organization or entity, metaphorically [Cowie, A. P, 1998]. In medical contexts, “a clean bill of health” provides a concise way for healthcare providers to communicate a positive outcome to patients, offering reassurance and clarity. For instance, after a routine check-up or following treatment, a doctor might inform the patient, “*You have a clean bill of health,*” effectively conveying that no health issues were detected. This phrase helps simplify complex medical information, making it accessible and less intimidating for patients, which is a key aspect of effective health communication. Metaphorically, the phrase has extended its meaning to signify approval or validation in non-medical areas. For example, an organization undergoing an audit might receive “*a clean bill of health*” if no irregularities are found, emphasizing its operational soundness and integrity. The cultural resonance of this phrase also highlights the societal value placed on health as a standard of well-being and functionality. By equating health with cleanliness and approval, the expression underscores a universal aspiration for health as a marker of stability and success. Its use in idiomatic communication reinforces the importance of transparency and trust, whether in personal health or broader societal contexts. In health campaigns

and education, “a clean bill of health” can also serve as an aspirational phrase, encouraging individuals to prioritize routine health screenings and preventive care to achieve or maintain optimal well-being. Its reassuring tone fosters a positive approach to health management, aligning with public health goals of promoting proactive and preventive behaviors [Lakoff, G. *et al.*, 1980].

The conceptualization of health in phraseology offers valuable insights into the cultural and cognitive frameworks that shape our understanding of well-being. By examining the metaphorical and cultural models embedded in health-related expressions, we can better appreciate the interplay between language, thought, and culture. This understanding is crucial for effective communication, particularly in multicultural and multilingual healthcare settings [Cowie, A. P, 1998].

Cultural Perceptions of Sickness in English and Uzbek Phraseology

The cultural conceptualizations of sickness are deeply embedded within the cultural fabric of a society, influencing and being influenced by language. In both English and Uzbek cultures, phraseological units related to illness offer profound insights into societal attitudes, beliefs, and values concerning health and disease. In English, numerous idioms and expressions reflect cultural attitudes toward sickness. For instance, the phrase “*under the weather*” is commonly used to describe someone feeling ill, metaphorically suggesting that adverse weather condition can effect on one's health [Lakoff, G. *et al.*, 1980]. Similarly, “*kick the bucket*” is a colloquial expression meaning to die, illustrating how language can euphemistically address the concept of death. These expressions often serve to soften the harsh realities of illness and mortality, indicating a cultural tendency to approach such topics with indirectness or humor [Teliya, V. N, 1996]. Meanwhile, The Uzbek language, abundant in proverbs and idiomatic expressions, encapsulates the cultural perspectives and societal attitudes toward health and illness in a distinctive approach. Expressions like “*ko‘z yumdi*” (literally “his/her eyes closed”) are used to denote someone has passed away, showcasing a metaphorical approach to discussing death. Additionally, the proverb “*Dardini bergan Alloh shifosini ham beradi*” translates to “God who gives the illness will also give cure”, highlighting a cultural belief in divine intervention in matters of health. Such expressions underscore the significance of

spirituality and communal values in Uzbek society's understanding of sickness and health [Nazarov, S. S, 2024].

While both English and Uzbek employ euphemistic and metaphorical language to discuss sickness, the underlying cultural values they reflect can differ. English expressions may emphasize individual experiences and often use humor or understatement as coping mechanisms [Cowie, A. P, 1998]. In contrast, Uzbek expressions frequently highlight communal beliefs and the role of spirituality in health, reflecting a collective approach to understanding and dealing with illness.

Phraseological expressions related to sickness serve as cultural lenses, offering insights into how societies perceive and cope with illness. By examining these expressions in both English and Uzbek, we gain a deeper understanding of the cultural values and beliefs that shape discussions of health and disease. Such comparative analyses not only enhance cross-cultural communication but also contribute to the broader field of cultural linguistics, illuminating the intricate relationship between language, culture, and cognition.

Influence of Religion and Superstition in Health-Related Phraseology

Religion and superstition play a significant role in shaping health-related phraseology, offering valuable insights into the cultural and societal values of both English and Uzbek speakers. These expressions reflect deeply ingrained beliefs, shaping how individuals and communities perceive, explain, and respond to health and illness. By embedding spiritual and supernatural elements into everyday language, these linguistic tools reveal the complex interplay between cultural practices, historical traditions, and collective attitudes toward well-being. Religious influences often highlight the connection between health and divine intervention, portraying recovery and wellness as gifts from a higher power. In English, this is reflected through phrases rooted in Christian traditions, which emphasize blessings, grace, and spiritual protection in moments of vulnerability. Similarly, in Uzbek, Islamic teachings heavily inform phraseological expressions, emphasizing patience, prayer, and reliance on divine will for healing. These religiously inspired idioms not only provide comfort and hope during illness but also reinforce moral values, such as gratitude, resilience, and communal care. Superstition also plays a pivotal role in health-related phraseology,

offering alternative explanations for illness and misfortune. These beliefs, often rooted in pre-scientific understandings of health, attribute sickness to supernatural forces, such as the evil eye or negative energies. In both English and Uzbek, superstitious expressions reveal societal concerns about external influences on health, as well as strategies for mitigating perceived risks. These phrases act as cultural artifacts, preserving the folk wisdom and protective practices of past generations. The influence of religion and superstition on health-related phraseology transcends mere linguistic expression; it shapes behaviors, fosters community ties, and provides frameworks for understanding the unpredictable nature of health and sickness. By studying these expressions, we gain deeper insights into the cultural narratives that define human interactions with health, illness, and healing, emphasizing the enduring impact of spiritual and supernatural beliefs on linguistic and social practices.

In English, many idiomatic expressions related to health have their roots in religious beliefs and traditions. For example, the phrase “God bless you”, often said after someone sneezes, originated from the medieval belief that sneezing could expel the soul from the body, leaving it vulnerable to evil spirits. This blessing was thought to protect the individual from harm, emphasizing a cultural reliance on divine intervention during moments of vulnerability. Similarly, the expression “by the grace of God” attributes positive health outcomes or recovery to divine will, highlighting the belief in a higher power’s role in human well-being [Teliya, V. N, 1996].

Similarly, Uzbek phraseology, heavily influenced by religion, particularly Islamic teachings, links health and divine intervention in many of its expressions. The phrase “Alloh shifo bersin” (May Allah grant healing) is a common way to wish someone a speedy recovery, underscoring the reliance on divine mercy for health restoration. Similarly, the proverb “Shifo – Allohdan” (Healing is from God) reflects a spiritual perspective on health, emphasizing that while illness may come naturally, true healing is granted by Allah. Such expressions reveal the significance of spirituality and faith in Uzbek cultural attitudes toward health and sickness.

Superstitious beliefs also influence health-related expressions in both languages. In English, phrases such as “knock on wood” are used to prevent bad luck after mentioning good health or fortune. This

expression originates from ancient beliefs in spirits residing in trees, thought to offer protection. Similarly, the saying “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” reflects folk beliefs in the medicinal properties of certain foods, illustrating the integration of superstition into health-related advice [Sharifian, F; 2017Cowie, A. P, 1998].

In Uzbek, superstitions are deeply embedded in health-related phraseology. For instance, the phrase “Ko‘zi tegdi” (The evil eye has struck) is used to explain sudden illness or misfortune, reflecting the belief that envy or excessive admiration can harm an individual. Another example, “Jin urdi/chaldi” (The jinn struck) is used to explain sudden, inexplicable illness or delirium, this phrase derives from the superstitious belief in jinns (supernatural beings) causing harm. It reflects the integration of folk beliefs into health-related language [Mamadjanova, M. R, 2024]. Both English and Uzbek cultures exhibit a rich tapestry of health-related expressions influenced by religion and superstition. English expressions blend Christian traditions with remnants of pre-Christian superstitions, while Uzbek phraseology is predominantly shaped by Islamic principles intertwined with local folk beliefs. These phraseologies not only reflect cultural values but also serve as mechanisms for understanding and coping with health and illness within their respective societal contexts.

CONCLUSION

The study of health and sickness perceptions through phraseology reveals the intricate relationship between language, culture, and societal values. Both English and Uzbek phraseologies serve as powerful linguistic tools that encapsulate attitudes toward well-being and illness, reflecting their respective cultural frameworks. English phraseology often emphasizes individualism, pragmatism, and proactive health management, while Uzbek phraseology highlights communal care, spiritual acceptance, and resilience.

Religion and superstition play a pivotal role in shaping health-related phraseology in both languages. Religious influences underscore the connection between health and divine intervention, while superstitions reveal deeply ingrained cultural beliefs about the causes and consequences of illness. These linguistic elements not only preserve cultural traditions but also offer insight into how societies navigate health and sickness within their historical and social contexts.

The comparative analysis demonstrates both divergences and universal themes. English phraseology tends to focus on individual agency, whereas Uzbek expressions integrate collective and spiritual dimensions. Despite these differences, shared human experiences-such as the universal value of health and the transient nature of sickness-emerge as common threads.

By examining health-related phraseology, we uncover the cultural narratives that shape linguistic expression and societal perspectives on well-being. This understanding enhances cross-cultural communication and highlights the profound impact of language as a reflection of collective identity and human experience.

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