

Phraseological Expressions in the
Uzbek Language: Cognitive
and Pragmatic Analysis (Based on the
works of Xudoyberdi To‘xtaboyev)

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Uzbek phraseological expressions from cognitive and pragmatic perspectives, focusing on their mental mapping, cultural context, functions in speech, and their role in literary works. The rich phraseological system of the Uzbek language reflects the culture, worldview, and communication style of its people. This study analyzes the cognitive (conceptual foundations in thought) and pragmatic (speech influence and communicative functions) characteristics of Uzbek phraseological units using the works of X. To‘xtaboyev as an example.

Keywords: Cognitive and pragmatic analysis, communicative effect, speech situation, phraseology

1. INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a primary mirror of national thought, culture, and social consciousness. Through language, a person interprets the surrounding environment, emotional experiences, and social relationships. Therefore, phraseological units represent one of the most vivid manifestations of national thought. They embody the historical experience, life observations, and moral and aesthetic views of a people.

According to linguist M. Jo'rayev, "Phraseological units reflect historical layers of national thinking, styles of worldview, and national mentality." In the Uzbek literary language, especially in artistic literature, phraseological expressions play a significant aesthetic role. In the works of children's writer Xudoyberdi To'xtaboyev, folk expressions, set expressions, irony, and metaphorical speech convey the national spirit, folk humor, and logic.

1.1. *Linguistic nature of phraseological units*

Phraseological units are part of the system of fixed expressions in a language. They consist of two or more words that express a holistic meaning, which differs from ordinary word combinations. A. Xo'jayev notes, "Phraseological units possess semantic integrity and syntactic stability, forming the emotional and aesthetic layer of language."

They can be classified in three ways:

1. Semantically – by the degree of meaning transfer (metaphoric, metonymic, idiomatic);
2. Structurally – as word combinations or sentences;
3. Pragmatically – by their function in speech (expressive, evaluative, ironic).

Examples such as "his heart sank," "her spirits lifted," and "he swallowed his words" combine semantic unity, metaphorical meaning, and expressiveness.

1.2. *Cognitive approach: Phraseological units as a window into thought*

Cognitive linguistics interprets phraseology in relation to human thought and conceptual worldview. According to Lakoff and Johnson, "Metaphor is not only an artistic device but also a fundamental structure of human cognition."

Uzbek phraseological expressions, particularly those associated with body parts (heart, head, mouth), reflect deeply rooted cultural concepts.

Table 1. *Analysis of cognitive metaphors*

Phraseological expression	Meaning	Cognitive basis (Metaphor)	Example (To'xtaboyev)
His heart sank	Fear, anxiety	Emotion is a physical reaction	"His heart sank, but a smile appeared on his face." (Sariq Devni Minib)
To look at someone's mouth	Respect, obedience	Speech is authority	"The children stared at their father's mouth, waiting for a word."
He swallowed his words	Speechlessness due to surprise	Speech is a physical action	"The boy was so astonished that he was silent as if he had swallowed his words."

These examples show that phraseological units function as conceptual metaphors, expressing emotions through physical states, revealing the anthropocentric nature of Uzbek culture.

1.3. *Pragmatic approach: Communicative and aesthetic functions*
Pragmatic analysis studies phraseological units in terms of their communicative intent, speech impact, and emotional-moral messages.

According to linguist D. Alimova, "The communicative value of a phraseological unit is evident in its impact within a speech context and its appropriateness to social situations."

In To'xtaboyev's works, phraseological units serve several pragmatic functions:

1. **Emotional impact:** e.g., "his heart sank," "her spirits fell," convey characters' emotions naturally;
2. **Character vividness:** e.g., "he wrinkled his head," "sleep eluded his eyes" depict mental and physical states vividly;
3. **Humor and irony:** used to entertain or gently correct;
4. **Moral lessons:** e.g., "The honest hand is raised high," "The liar's life is short," conveying ethical ideas.

1.4. *Integration of cognitive and pragmatic analysis*

Phraseological units simultaneously function as cognitive models and pragmatic tools. For instance, “he swallowed his words” conceptually involves “speech is a physical action,” while pragmatically it indicates speechlessness due to surprise.

Thus, in To‘xtaboyev’s works, phraseology:

- On the cognitive level, enlivens conceptual images in national thought;
- On the pragmatic level, makes speech expressive, natural, and humorous.

Phrasal expressions (idiomatic units) in language

Phrasal expressions, or idiomatic units, are among the richest and most complex layers of language. They not only enhance the expressiveness of speech but also reflect national consciousness, culture, and literary-aesthetic values. Linguists study idiomatic expressions from semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and stylistic perspectives. At the same time, phrasal expressions require in-depth analysis from psycholinguistic and sociocultural viewpoints.

Phrasal expressions and cognitive linguistics

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, idiomatic expressions reflect metaphorical and conceptual structures (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For example, the phrase “having a pure heart” not only conveys a personal quality but also indicates a person’s position within socially valued norms. In this sense, idioms function to encode social meanings through language.

Sociocultural context

Phrasal expressions reflect national culture. For instance, in the works of To‘xtaboyev, expressions such as “open-eyed” describe a person’s moral qualities while also reflecting values esteemed by society. Sociocultural analysis shows that idiomatic units not only embellish speech but also serve as a means of expressing the collective consciousness of society.

Psycholinguistic analysis

Understanding and using idiomatic expressions activates cognitive processes. Psycholinguistic research indicates that children and young learners develop empathy, emotional identification, and inner speech through exposure to idioms in literature. Additionally, idioms enhance the ability to internally model language and perceive emotional states.

Artistic and stylistic functions

In literary texts, idiomatic expressions perform a unique aesthetic function. In To‘xtaboyev’s works, they:

- Accurately convey characters’ psychological states;
- Strengthen metaphorical imagery;
- Direct the reader’s attention to the main meaning of the text.

For example, the phrase “spirits lifted” conveys not only a character’s mood but also evokes motivational and emotional responses in the reader through its literary context.

Diachronic analysis

Idiomatic expressions undergo semantic and pragmatic changes over time. For example, the phrase “kept one’s word” initially expressed astonishment, whereas in modern usage it signifies voluntary silence or reflection. Thus, a diachronic approach reveals the semantic evolution of idioms and provides a deeper understanding of language history (Jakobson 1960).

Intertextual analysis

Comparing idiomatic expressions with other literary sources allows researchers to trace the evolution of national mentality and artistic expression. For instance, comparing idioms in oral folk literature with those in To‘xtaboyev’s works enables observation not only of language change but also of dynamic developments in national literature and culture.

Modern research and scientific insights

Recent studies show that idiomatic expressions are important not only in linguistics but also in artificial intelligence and natural language processing (NLP). For example, automatic recognition and translation of idioms are challenging due to their idiomatic and contextual characteristics.

This highlights the need for modern methods for the linguistic analysis of idiomatic expressions.

Phrasal expressions require thorough analysis from linguistic, sociocultural, psycholinguistic, artistic, diachronic, and intertextual perspectives. They reveal the complex layers of language and literature while creating a rich expression of national consciousness and culture. Therefore, studying idiomatic expressions using contemporary scientific methods remains a pressing issue in linguistics and literary studies.

This article analyzes the cognitive and pragmatic features of phraseological expressions in the Uzbek language based on the works of Khudoyberdi To‘xtaboyev. The study explores the author’s use of idioms, their stylistic, aesthetic, and educational significance in children’s literature. From a cognitive perspective, the research identifies the conceptual foundations of phraseological units, while the pragmatic approach examines their communicative and emotional functions within the text.

Language is the most essential reflection of a nation’s thinking, culture, and spiritual world. The worldview, life experience, and values of a people are often expressed through phraseological units. In Uzbek literature, idiomatic expressions occupy a special place in works written for children, as they allow the writer to convey not only the plot but also the national mentality and moral values.

Khudoyberdi To‘xtaboyev’s works such as *Riding the Yellow Giant*, *The Land of Sweet Melons*, and *The Boy with Five Children* are among the masterpieces of Uzbek children’s literature. These works are distinguished by their rich use of folk expressions, humor, and idioms, which serve as key linguistic and stylistic devices. Therefore, this study examines the phraseological expressions in To‘xtaboyev’s works from cognitive and pragmatic perspectives.

1. *Cognitive analysis of phraseological expressions*

Cognitive linguistics studies language in connection with human thinking and perception. The idioms used in To‘xtaboyev’s works are often based on metaphorical concepts derived from the everyday experiences of the Uzbek people. For example:

- “His heart became as light as a mountain” – expresses a person’s relief and joy. Cognitively, this idiom is associated with the concept of inner peace.
- “His heart was disturbed”, “Darkness fell before his eyes” – represent negative emotional states and are conceptually linked to the idea of psychological imbalance.

Since To‘xtaboyev writes in a style close to children’s cognition, he often selects idioms that are directly connected to folk speech. This approach fosters the development of figurative thinking in young readers. Furthermore, such phraseological expressions help children express emotions and perceive the world through vivid, image-based language.

2. *Pragmatic analysis of phraseological expressions*

Pragmatics studies the communicative goals and contextual functions of linguistic units. In To‘xtaboyev’s works, idioms perform several important pragmatic functions:

- **Emotive function:** expressing the characters’ inner feelings: “The mother’s heart was at ease.”, “The boy’s heart sank.”. These idioms intensify the emotional tone of the narrative.
- **Evaluative function:** reflecting the author’s or character’s attitude toward events: “He spoke as if he had crushed the boy to the ground.” This function conveys folk-style moral judgment within the story.
- **Influential (didactic) function:** shaping the reader’s moral and cultural perception. Through idioms, the author transmits national values and ethical norms to young readers.

To‘xtaboyev frequently uses idiomatic expressions in dialogues, which makes his characters’ speech natural and dynamic. This

demonstrates the writer’s skillful use of linguistic tools to create a communicative environment suitable for children’s psychology.

The phraseological expressions in Khudoyberdi To‘xtaboyev’s works reflect the national worldview, life philosophy, and moral principles of the Uzbek people.

Their cognitive analysis reveals the conceptual basis of idioms in human consciousness, while their pragmatic analysis explains their communicative and expressive functions in the text.

Thus, To‘xtaboyev’s idioms serve not only as artistic embellishments but also as effective means of shaping children’s thinking, moral values, and aesthetic taste. The author’s mastery of phraseological expression plays a vital role in introducing the national mentality to the younger generation and in showcasing the expressive richness of the Uzbek language.

Table 2. *Phrasal expressions (idiomatic units) in language – expanded overview*

Analysis type	Description / function	Examples from To‘xtaboyev / Uzbek language	Cognitive / literary significance
Cognitive linguistics	Idioms reflect metaphorical and conceptual structures; encode social meanings	“Having a pure heart” (“yuragitoza”)	Shows moral qualities and social positioning; helps understand conceptual metaphors in culture
Sociocultural context	Reflect national culture and collective values	“Open-eyed” (“ko‘ziochiq”)	Illustrates traits valued by society; embeds cultural norms in language
Psycholinguistic analysis	Activates cognitive processes; develops inner speech and	Literary exposure to idioms in children’s literature	Enhances emotional perception, empathy, and internal

	empathy		modeling of language
Artistic / stylistic functions	Adds aesthetic value; conveys psychological states; strengthens metaphors; guides reader attention	“Spirits lifted” (“ruhiko‘tarildi”)	Creates emotional resonance; motivates readers; emphasizes key themes in literature
Diachronic analysis	Tracks semantic and pragmatic changes over time	“Kept one’s word” (“so‘ziniyutgan”)	Reveals historical semantic evolution; shows how idioms adapt to contemporary contexts
Intertextual analysis	Compares idioms across literary sources	Oral folk literature vs. To‘xtaboyev’s works	Highlights changes in national mentality, literary styles, and cultural continuity
Modern / scientific insights	Relevance in AI and NLP; idiom detection and translation challenges	Automatic idiom recognition and translation (Kornai 2013)	Shows complexity of idioms in computational linguistics; emphasizes importance of context and idiomaticity

2. CONCLUSION

Uzbek phraseological units are not merely linguistic units but a synthesis of culture, thought, and communication. In Xudoyberdi To‘xtaboyev’s literature, they convey human emotions, social

relations, and national mentality artistically, making them essential for understanding the Uzbek worldview, especially in children's literature.

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