

THE EXPRESSION OF “SMELL” (OLFACTORY) MEANING IN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the expression of the concept of smell (olfactory perception) in English and Uzbek phraseological units from a cognitive-semantic perspective. The study reveals that smell-related phraseological units are predominantly metaphorical in nature and primarily serve to express negative evaluation, intuitive perception, moral judgment, and social assessment. Based on a comparative analysis, the close relationship between the concept of smell and national-cultural cognition in both languages is highlighted.

Keywords: phraseological unit, concept of smell, olfactory perception, cognitive metaphor, evaluative semantics, national worldview.

In modern linguistics, the issue of how humans perceive the world and represent it through language occupies a central position. From this perspective, the sense of smell (olfaction) is considered one of the most ancient and subjective channels of human perception. Olfactory perception is directly connected with emotion, memory, and evaluation, which explains its active reflection in linguistic units, especially within the phraseological layer.

For a long time, the linguistic expression of smell was regarded as secondary. However, contemporary cognitive research challenges this view. In particular, N. Burenhult has scientifically demonstrated that the ability to name smells is closely linked to language and culture. According to his studies, in some languages smells function as independent lexical-semantic categories and form structured conceptual systems comparable to color or sound (Burenhult, 2011). This approach provides a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing smell as a metaphorical and evaluative device in phraseological units.

Phraseological units constitute the most stable and culturally marked layer of language. Within them, smell is expressed not as a direct sensory experience, but rather through figurative, metaphorical, and evaluative meanings. Therefore, the study of the smell concept in phraseological units plays a crucial role in understanding the relationship between language and cognition.

The aim of this article is to identify the models through which the concept of smell is expressed in English and Uzbek phraseological units and to analyze their cognitive and linguocultural characteristics.

Human sensory perception and the linguistic representation of reality occupy a central position in cognitive linguistics. Among sensory modalities, olfaction stands out as a particularly subjective and emotionally rich channel of experience. Smell perception is closely associated with memory, emotion, and evaluation, which explains its frequent reflection in phraseological expressions.

Phraseological units represent one of the most stable and culturally rich layers of language. They are typically characterized by figurative meaning, fixed structure, and

expressive potential (Vinogradov, 1977; Kunin, 1996). In phraseology, the concept of smell rarely appears as a literal sensory experience; instead, it functions as a metaphorical, evaluative, and intuitive means of interpretation.

One of the most influential theoretical sources in contemporary research on this topic is the work of Nicola Burenhult. Burenhult, a Swedish linguist and cognitive scientist, has conducted extensive research on olfactory language and the linguistic representation of sensory concepts. His studies focus on several key areas:

Linguistic expression of smell: Burenhult investigates how different languages categorize and name smells, demonstrating that some languages possess independent lexical systems for olfactory perception.

Olfactory lexicon and phraseology: He analyzes smell-related phraseological units, revealing their semantic, metaphorical, and evaluative properties.

Perception and cognition: Burenhult treats smell not merely as a physiological sense but as a cognitive concept closely linked to experience and subconscious processing.

Cross-cultural differences: His research shows that the conceptualization and linguistic expression of smell are deeply rooted in cultural cognition and lexical traditions.

Based on Burenhult's findings, the concept of smell in phraseological units serves as a strong theoretical foundation for expressing intuitive perception, moral evaluation, and sociocultural connotations (Burenhult & Majid, 2011).

In the present study, phraseological units are understood as stable, figurative, and emotionally expressive linguistic units.

In cognitive linguistics, a concept is defined as a generalized model of knowledge and experience formed in the human mind. According to the theory proposed by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, abstract notions are often understood through sensory experience. Smell is one such sensory domain that is frequently represented through metaphorical models in language.

In phraseological units, the concept of "smell" often functions as a means of expressing abstract notions such as evaluation, suspicion, and moral states.

The research material consists of phraseological units drawn from English and Uzbek phraseological dictionaries, as well as literary and journalistic texts. The study employs comparative, semantic, and cognitive-metaphorical methods of analysis.

In phraseological units, smell is frequently associated with negative evaluation. Unpleasant odors are cognitively linked to danger, impurity, and moral corruption.

In English, the expression to smell a rat represents olfactory perception as a means of detecting hidden danger or deception, while something stinks indicates injustice or dishonesty.

In Uzbek phraseology, expressions such as "nomi sasidi" and "badbo'y ish" convey negative moral judgment toward a person or situation. In these cases, smell functions as a metaphor for moral deviation. Based on such expressions, the following cognitive model can be identified:

Intuitive perception refers to the ability to sense or understand a situation without explicit logical reasoning, relying instead on internal feelings, experience, and subconscious signals. In broader terms, intuition results from the rapid and automatic processing of accumulated sensory and experiential information.

From a linguistic and cognitive perspective, intuitive perception is closely connected with sensory experience, particularly smell, and is expressed metaphorically in language.



Biologically, olfaction is associated with early danger detection, which is reflected in phraseology.

According to Burenhult's research, olfactory information is processed rapidly and directly in the human mind, making it closely related to intuitive cognition. Phraseological units linguistically encode this process by expressing the meaning of "anticipation" through metaphor.

For example, in English, something smells fishy conveys an intuitive sense that something is wrong or suspicious. In Uzbek, expressions such as "boshim bir narsa deyapti" and "bu ishning izi bor" express a similar intuitive awareness without directly naming smell. Thus, phraseological units represent smell as a cognitive and metaphorical mechanism for interpreting experience.

Similarly, the English expression to smell trouble denotes the anticipation of a problematic situation, while the Uzbek phrase "bir baloni sezmoq" conveys a comparable meaning through the verb sezmoq ("to sense"). In this model, smell is conceptually linked with intuition and experience:

In phraseological units, smell also plays an important role in evaluating a person's social reputation and moral standing. In Uzbek, the expression "nomi sasidi" indicates damage to one's social reputation. In English, expressions such as a rotten reputation similarly contain an olfactory semantic component used to express social condemnation.

These examples demonstrate the linguocultural nature of smell-related phraseological units.

The results of the study demonstrate that the concept of smell in phraseological units is predominantly metaphorical and evaluative in nature. Through olfactory imagery, abstract notions such as moral judgment, suspicion, intuition, and social evaluation are conceptualized. Although English and Uzbek share similar cognitive models in the expression of smell, they differ in their national and cultural realizations. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, cognition, and sensory experience.

References

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