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Linguo-Cognitive Analysis of Idiomatic Compounds: Evidence from English and Uzbek

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Abstract. Idiomatic compounds constitute a complex lexical category in which semantic opacity, conceptual motivation, and cultural knowledge intersect. Unlike transparent compounds, idiomatic compounds encode meanings that cannot be fully derived from their constituent elements and therefore require cognitive interpretation and cultural competence. This article investigates idiomatic compounds in English and Uzbek from a linguo-cognitive perspective, focusing on semantic motivation, conceptual metaphors, and cross-linguistic similarities and differences. Drawing on comparative and cognitive linguistic frameworks, the study analyses partial and full idiomatic compounds as manifestations of conceptual structuring in language. The findings demonstrate that idiomatic compounds reflect culturally embedded models of perception and categorisation, while at the same time revealing universal cognitive mechanisms underlying metaphorical mapping and lexicalisation. The research contributes to the theoretical understanding of idiomaticity in compounding and highlights the relevance of cognitive linguistics for contrastive lexicology.

Keywords: idiomatic compounds, cognitive linguistics, English, Uzbek, metaphor, conceptualisation

Introduction. Compounding is one of the most productive word-formation processes in both English and Uzbek, serving as a major source of lexical enrichment. While many compounds exhibit transparent semantic relations between their components, a significant subset displays idiomatic meaning, where the overall interpretation cannot be predicted from the meanings of the individual constituents. These formations, commonly referred to as *idiomatic compounds*, occupy an intermediate position between free lexical combinations and fixed phraseological units. The study of idiomatic compounds has traditionally been approached from a structural or semantic perspective, focusing on morphological patterns and degrees of semantic opacity (Kooij, 1968). However, recent developments in cognitive linguistics have shifted attention toward the conceptual mechanisms that motivate idiomatic meaning and the cultural knowledge embedded in lexical constructions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Stockwell, 2002). Within this paradigm, idiomatic compounds are not viewed as arbitrary anomalies but as systematic reflections of human conceptualisation and metaphorical thinking. In the context of English and Uzbek, contrastive studies on compounding and idiomaticity remain relatively limited. Existing research has addressed partial idiomatic compounds and structural characteristics (Gulamjanovich, 2015), as well



as phraseological units from a cognitive and cultural perspective (Odilova, 2025; Sugdiyona, 2025). Nevertheless, a comprehensive linguo-cognitive analysis of idiomatic compounds across these two languages has not yet been fully developed. The present article aims to fill this gap by examining idiomatic compounds in English and Uzbek through the lens of cognitive linguistics. The objectives of the study are threefold: (1) to classify types of idiomatic compounds in both languages; (2) to analyse their conceptual motivation and metaphorical basis; and (3) to identify cross-linguistic similarities and culturally specific patterns. By integrating contrastive analysis with cognitive theory, the article seeks to contribute to the theoretical understanding of idiomatic compounding and its role in lexical semantics.

Theoretical Background. Idiomatic compounds are lexical units whose meaning is partially or wholly non-compositional. In contrast to transparent compounds such as *blackboard* or *bookshelf*, idiomatic compounds like *red tape* or *butterfly* exhibit semantic shifts that cannot be directly inferred from their components. Kooij (1968) was among the first scholars to highlight the proximity between compounds and idioms, arguing that idiomaticity arises when the semantic relation between constituents becomes conventionalised and opaque. Subsequent studies have proposed a distinction between **partial idiomatic compounds**, where one component retains literal meaning, and **full idiomatic compounds**, where both components contribute metaphorically to the overall sense (Gulamjanovich, 2015). This distinction is particularly relevant in contrastive analysis, as the degree of idiomaticity varies across languages and reflects language-specific lexicalisation strategies. Cognitive linguistics provides a theoretical framework for explaining idiomatic meaning as a product of conceptual mapping rather than lexical irregularity. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is a fundamental mechanism of thought, structuring abstract concepts in terms of more concrete domains. Within this view, idiomatic expressions and compounds are motivated by underlying conceptual metaphors and image schemas. Stockwell (2002) further emphasises that lexical meaning emerges from embodied experience and cultural models. Idiomatic compounds therefore encode shared conceptualisations that are cognitively accessible to members of a linguistic community. This approach allows researchers to analyse idiomatic compounds not only as lexical units but also as manifestations of culturally mediated cognition.

Studies on English and Uzbek phraseology have demonstrated that idiomatic expressions often reflect culturally salient metaphors and value systems (Odilova, 2025; Sugdiyona, 2025). These findings are equally applicable to idiomatic compounds, which frequently derive from metaphorical extensions of everyday experience. For instance, compounds denoting social roles, character traits, or abstract states often rely on embodied metaphors such as *vision*, *movement*, or



containment. From a contrastive perspective, the comparison of English and Uzbek idiomatic compounds offers insights into both universal cognitive mechanisms and language-specific conceptual patterns. While certain metaphors appear cross-linguistically stable, others reflect culturally distinct modes of categorisation and evaluation.

Methodology. The present study adopts a qualitative, contrastive methodology grounded in cognitive linguistics. The corpus consists of idiomatic and partially idiomatic compounds extracted from bilingual dictionaries, phraseological collections, and previous studies (Gulamjanovich, 2015; Luwiti, 2024). The selected units were classified according to degree of idiomaticity, semantic domain, and metaphorical motivation. Analytical procedures involved: (1) identification of compositional and non-compositional meanings; (2) reconstruction of underlying conceptual metaphors; and (3) comparison of English and Uzbek patterns with respect to semantic transparency and cultural specificity.

The analysis draws on theoretical concepts from metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), cognitive semantics (Stockwell, 2002), and contrastive lexicology (Gulamjanovich, 2015).

Analysis and Discussion. The data reveal two principal categories in both languages: partial idiomatic compounds and full idiomatic compounds. Partial idiomatic compounds preserve literal meaning in one component, as in English *paper tiger* or Uzbek *temir odam* (“iron man”), where the modifier contributes metaphorical evaluation. Full idiomatic compounds, by contrast, display complete semantic opacity, as in English *butterfly* or Uzbek *ko‘zoynak* (“glasses”), whose meanings are conventionalised and lexically fixed. Gulamjanovich (2015) notes that partial idiomatic compounds are more productive in both languages, suggesting a gradual pathway from transparency to idiomaticity. This observation supports the cognitive view that lexicalisation emerges through repeated metaphorical usage and entrenchment in the mental lexicon. The analysis indicates that many idiomatic compounds are motivated by conceptual metaphors grounded in bodily experience. Compounds denoting social relations and character traits frequently rely on metaphors of **strength**, **vision**, and **movement**. For example, English *cold-blooded* and Uzbek *sovuq qonli* (“cold-blooded”) conceptualise emotional detachment through the metaphor EMOTION IS TEMPERATURE, reflecting a shared embodied model. Other compounds exhibit culturally specific mappings. Uzbek compounds related to honour, family, and social hierarchy often encode evaluative meanings that lack direct equivalents in English. Sugdiyona (2025) argues that such units reflect culturally salient cognitive models shaped by social organisation and moral norms. These findings confirm that idiomatic compounds simultaneously instantiate universal cognitive schemas and culture-



specific conceptualisations. The boundary between idiomatic compounds and phraseological units proves to be fluid. Odilova (2025) demonstrates that many idiomatic expressions originate from compound structures that later undergo lexical fixation. Similarly, Luwiti (2024) shows that semantic opacity in compounds arises through pragmatic inference and conventionalisation. From a cognitive perspective, idiomatic compounds can be regarded as compressed metaphors that condense conceptual mappings into compact lexical forms. Their stability in the lexicon reflects the entrenchment of specific conceptual associations within a linguistic community.

Conclusion. The linguo-cognitive analysis of idiomatic compounds in English and Uzbek reveals that idiomaticity in compounding is not an arbitrary phenomenon but a cognitively motivated process rooted in metaphor, embodiment, and cultural knowledge. Partial and full idiomatic compounds emerge through gradual lexicalisation, reflecting universal conceptual mechanisms alongside language-specific models of categorisation. The contrastive perspective highlights both convergence and divergence between the two languages. While shared metaphors testify to common cognitive foundations, culturally specific compounds illustrate the role of socio-cultural experience in shaping lexical meaning. These findings underscore the relevance of cognitive linguistics for the study of compounding and idiomaticity and open new perspectives for further research in contrastive lexicology and phraseology. Future studies may expand the corpus, incorporate quantitative methods, and explore diachronic developments in idiomatic compounding. Such research will further illuminate the dynamic interaction between cognition, language, and culture in lexical formation.

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