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TRANSLATION AND MULTILINGUAL CHALLENGES OF IDIOMS EXPRESSING "LIFE"

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the role of idioms related to "life" in shaping collective narratives about success, struggle, and destiny in English and Uzbek languages. Idioms are more than fixed expressions; they are cultural condensations that reflect shared worldviews, historical experience, and collective psychology. Through comparative linguistic analysis, this research explores how life-related idioms are utilized in both languages to encode concepts of personal and communal achievement, endurance, and fate. The study reveals key differences and parallels in metaphorical framing, idiomatic structures, and sociocultural resonance. It contributes to a deeper understanding of how idiomatic language informs the way communities articulate and transmit life stories and values.

KEYWORDS: *Life idioms, success, struggle, destiny, English-Uzbek comparison, collective narratives, metaphorical framing, cultural linguistics.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a means of communication but a vessel of collective memory, cultural identity, and social values. Within this framework, idioms—particularly those centered on "life"—hold significant linguistic and cultural weight. They serve as narrative shortcuts that encapsulate complex experiences and emotions, often tied to ideas of success, struggle, and destiny.

Idioms like "life is a journey," "to make something of one's life," or "to fight for one's life" in English find functional and emotional equivalents in Uzbek expressions such as *hayot yo'li*, *tirikchilik qilish*, or *taqdir bilan olishmoq*. These expressions offer a window into how societies understand life's challenges and triumphs.

This study aims to examine how such idioms function in shaping collective narratives, comparing English and Uzbek expressions to identify semantic, structural, and cultural commonalities and contrasts.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative comparative linguistic methodology. A corpus of 25 idioms from English and 25 from Uzbek was compiled using reputable dictionaries (Oxford Idioms Dictionary, Uzbek Phraseological Dictionary) and supplemented by examples from literature and media.

Each idiom was categorized based on its thematic relevance to success, struggle, or destiny. Analytical tools from cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics were applied to identify:

- Conceptual metaphors embedded in idioms
- Cultural and social context of usage
- Idiomatic equivalence or divergence between the two languages

Additionally, interviews with bilingual speakers were conducted to understand the perceived connotation and emotional impact of selected idioms in real-life discourse.

Results. The comparative analysis of 50 idioms (25 from English, 25 from Uzbek) reveals that both languages use life-related idioms extensively to express a wide range of human experiences. These idioms can be classified into three main semantic fields: **success**, **struggle**, and **destiny** [2]**.** Below, we expand on each category with additional idioms, structural patterns, and contextual usage.

Success Idioms

- English Idioms
  - "Make something of one's life"
  - "Turn one's life around"

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- "Live life to the fullest"
- "Climb the ladder of life"
- "On top of the world"

o Uzbek Equivalents:

- *Hayotda o'z o'rnini topmoq*
- *Hayotini o'zgartirib yubormoq*
- *To'kin hayot kechirmoq*
- *Hayot pillapoyalaridan ko'tarilmoq*
- *Baxt qushini qo'lga kiritmoq*

These idioms often use metaphors of **vertical movement** (climb, rise, reach) and **spatial progress**, signaling personal achievement or societal success. Interestingly, Uzbek expressions are more likely to emphasize *finding one's place* or *catching luck*, suggesting a blend of effort and fate in success narratives.

Struggle Idioms

o English idioms:

- "To fight for one's life"
- "Life is not a bed of roses"
- "To be at a crossroads in life"
- "To hit rock bottom"
- "Life knocks you down"

o Uzbek equivalents:

- *Hayot bilan olishmoq*
- *Hayot bir tekis kechmaydi*
- *Hayot yo'lidan adashmoq*
- *Hayot past-balandli bo'ladi*
- *Boshidan og'ir hayot kechirmoq*

Struggle idioms in both languages heavily rely on **conflict, journey, and terrain** metaphors. English idioms often portray life as an unpredictable, harsh environment. In contrast, Uzbek idioms frame life's struggle more morally—emphasizing **sabr (patience)**, **imtihon (testing)**, and social responsibility, as in *hayot imtihoni* (life's trial). This suggests that struggle is seen not only as a challenge but as a character-building process.

Destiny Idioms

o English idioms:

- "What is meant to be will be"
- "Life has a way of working things out"
- "It's written in the stars"
- "The hands of fate"
- "Such is life"

o Uzbek equivalents:

- *Taqdirdan qochib bo'lmaydi*
- *Hayotning o'z yo'li bor*
- *Peshonasiga yozilgan*
- *Taqdir o'yinlari*
- *Bunga hayotning hukmi shu*

Uzbek idioms here are more religiously and spiritually loaded, often referencing **fate (taqdir)** and **divine will** (*peshona*, *yozuv*) [4]. English idioms, while sometimes fatalistic, also include a sense of randomness or poetic inevitability, such as in "written in the stars." Uzbek expressions suggest a more deterministic and less individualistic worldview.

Moreover, some idioms are unique and culture-bound. For example, *baxt qushining uchib ketishi* (the bird of happiness flying away) has no direct English equivalent, though conceptually close to "missed opportunity" or "luck ran out."

DISCUSSION

The expanded results shed light on the deep-rooted metaphorical and cultural patterns that distinguish English and Uzbek life-related idioms. While there are shared themes—such as life as a journey, a test, or a battleground—each language filters these experiences through its **cultural schema** and **historical consciousness**.

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Cultural Worldviews and Metaphorical Framing

Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (1980) posits that abstract domains (like life) are understood via concrete experiences (like movement, war, weather) [1]. This is evident in both languages:

English: idioms often reflect **individual autonomy**, **personal control**, and **agency**. For instance, "turn your life around" implies that a person can radically change their destiny through action.

Uzbek: idioms often reflect **collective responsibility**, **divine orchestration**, and **moral judgment**. Expressions like *taqdirga tan berish* (to submit to fate) imply less personal control and more acceptance of life's flow as ordained.

This difference may be rooted in Western secularism vs. Central Asian-Islamic fatalism. The Uzbek cultural context often sees life as a **test given by Allah**, whereas the English-speaking world often interprets life as a **project** one can shape.

Emotional Connotation and Social Use

Idioms are not only linguistic units but emotional vehicles [3]. The English idiom "life is not a bed of roses" carries a mildly pessimistic but motivational tone, while *hayotning har kuni sinov* (every day of life is a test) evokes resilience through suffering. Moreover, Uzbek idioms often contain implicit advice or moral lessons. For example, *hayot yo'liga sabr bilan qarash kerak* (you must look at life with patience) is more than a description—it's a worldview. English idioms are more descriptive than prescriptive, focusing on narrating the experience rather than instructing the behavior.

Implications for Translation and Intercultural Dialogue

Translation of such idioms requires more than linguistic equivalence—it requires **cultural transposition** [5]. A literal translation of *taqdir o'yinlari* (games of fate) as "fate's games" in English would sound odd or archaic. Instead, a translator might choose "twists of fate" or "fate's tricks," depending on the tone.

Understanding the sociocultural context behind idioms helps translators avoid **semantic flattening**, where the deep meaning is lost, and **cultural mismatches**, where idioms sound unnatural or confusing in the target language.

This study suggests that idioms of life function as **linguistic mirrors of collective values**. In pedagogical settings, highlighting such contrasts can be beneficial for language learners, especially in the fields of **phraseology**, **translation studies**, and **intercultural communication**.

CONCLUSION

Idioms about life are not just linguistic artifacts but narrative tools that reflect and reinforce cultural perceptions of success, struggle, and destiny. This comparative study of English and Uzbek idioms demonstrates that while there are universal themes in human experience, the idiomatic expressions that convey them are deeply rooted in distinct sociocultural and metaphysical systems. Recognizing and understanding these nuances enhances not only translation accuracy but also intercultural empathy and communication.

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