

The Reflection of Human External Appearance through Somatic Phraseological Units in English and Uzbek Languages

Jumanazarov Samandar Urinovich

Teacher of foreign languages

Karshi state technical university

jumanazarovsamandar45@gmail.com

Abstract: *This paper explores how somatic phraseological units (SPUs), which are idioms involving human body parts, reflect the external, physical characteristics of individuals in both English and Uzbek languages. By analyzing idioms and expressions that depict physical appearance, this study identifies how cultures encode physical traits, beauty, and bodily impressions through language. The findings reveal both universal trends and culturally specific perspectives that shape how external human image is conceptualized. The article presents theoretical ideas in this regard and proves them with examples.*

Keywords: *Somatic phraseologisms, external appearance, idioms, physical traits, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics, cultural semantics.*

Human physical appearance has always been a subject of interest in literature, folklore, and everyday communication. Both English and Uzbek languages are rich in phraseological units that describe or evaluate a person's external features using body-related idioms. These idioms not only function as figurative expressions but also serve as cultural markers, revealing societal attitudes towards physical traits such as beauty, height, posture, skin tone, facial expression, and more. This article aims to examine somatic phraseologisms that describe the outer image of a person, highlighting cross-cultural similarities and differences.

Somatic phraseologisms belong to a wider class of idioms in which body parts serve as the core metaphorical element. These expressions are used to describe not only internal states (emotions, thoughts) but also physical characteristics. The human body acts as a universal source of metaphorical mapping, but the meanings of these idioms can vary significantly across languages, reflecting cultural attitudes and aesthetic values.

Analysis of Somatic Idioms Describing External Features

English Somatic Idioms Related to Appearance:

To be all ears – attentive and physically alert (though idiomatic, it reflects bodily orientation)

To turn heads – to attract attention due to physical attractiveness

Big-boned – euphemism for a large or overweight build

Rosy cheeks – healthy, youthful appearance

Sharp nose / Hooked nose – distinctive facial features

Well-built – muscular or strong physique

Skin and bones – extremely thin

Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed – energetic and fresh-looking

Uzbek Somatic Idioms Related to Appearance:

Ko'zlari olma-ko'k (lit. apple-blue eyes) – beautiful, bright eyes

Burni osmonni teshib yuboray deb turibdi (lit. their nose is about to pierce the sky) – arrogant look, possibly attractive but with a negative connotation

Yuz-ko'zlari charog'on – radiant, glowing face

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME-5, ISSUE-5

Qo'li gul – someone with beautiful hands, often used for women

Tana tuzilishi kelishgan – well-proportioned body

Ko'rinishidan odamga o'xshaydi – appearance that matches social expectations

Og'zida so'zi bor, yuzida ko'rki bor – both verbally and visually attractive

There are both convergences and divergences in how physical appearance is linguistically encoded in English and Uzbek. Both languages use body-related metaphors to emphasize attractiveness or unattractiveness, yet the connotative layer of these idioms differs due to cultural norms. For example, in English, being “big-boned” is a euphemism, while in Uzbek, physical descriptors can carry more direct aesthetic or moral judgment.

Uzbek idioms often combine visual and ethical features (yuz-ko'zlari charog'on suggests not only beauty but also light and hope), reflecting a holistic approach to external image. English idioms tend to separate physical traits from moral implications, focusing more on perception and impression than moral connotation.

Moreover, the Uzbek language features more expressions related to social decorum and modesty linked to external appearance, which reflects traditional views on bodily expression and public image. Idioms are not mere linguistic decorations; they carry the cultural DNA of a people. Through somatic phraseologisms, we see how societies construct beauty standards, reinforce social roles, and comment on human nature. In Uzbek culture, appearance often intersects with moral and social evaluation, while in English, physical traits are more commonly evaluated in terms of attraction, vitality, or social presence.

The metaphorical use of the body illustrates how languages mirror their speakers' worldview. For instance, facial expressions in Uzbek idioms often signal inner character (ko'rinishidan odamga o'xshaydi), while English favors observable or performative traits (to turn heads).

This comparative analysis of English and Uzbek somatic phraseological units demonstrates that both languages richly use body-based idioms to describe human external appearance. However, the cultural framing of these idioms reflects differing social values, aesthetic ideals, and communicative preferences. Recognizing and interpreting these linguistic tools deepens our understanding of cross-cultural perception and the anthropocentric nature of language.

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THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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