



THIS PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AND THEIR COGNITIVE REPRESENTATION IN ENGLISH LITERARY TEXTS

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Ilmiy rahbar:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20086949>

ARTICLE INFO

Qabul qilindi: 04-may 2026 yil
Ma'qullandi: 06-may 2026 yil
Nashr qilindi: 08-may 2026 yil

KEY WORDS

phraseological units, cognitive linguistics, literary discourse, conceptual metaphor, idiomatic transformation, semantic analysis, figurative language, discourse creativity.

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the cognitive and semantic mechanisms underlying the use of phraseological units in English literary discourse. Particular attention is paid to the interaction between figurative language and conceptual thinking, revealing how fixed expressions operate as cognitive models that structure human perception and interpretation of reality. The study examines the transformation of phraseological meanings within literary contexts and identifies the ways authors manipulate conventional idioms to produce additional stylistic and pragmatic effects.

The research is based on a comparative and contextual analysis of phraseological units extracted from English literary texts of different genres. The analysis demonstrates that idiomatic expressions function not only as stylistic ornaments but also as instruments of conceptual representation that activate associative and cultural knowledge in the reader's mind. The article explores the relationship between metaphorical thinking, semantic reinterpretation, and discourse creativity, emphasizing the role of phraseological units in constructing implicit meanings and emotional intensity.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in its integrated cognitive-discursive approach to phraseological analysis. Unlike traditional studies focused mainly on semantic classification or stylistic description, this research reveals the dynamic nature of phraseological units in literary communication and explains their role in the formation of conceptual imagery. The study also identifies mechanisms of phraseological transformation that contribute to textual individuality and authorial expression.

The results obtained may contribute to the further development of cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, literary stylistics, and translation studies, as well as provide practical value for teaching figurative language in foreign language education.

Introduction

The study of phraseological units has become one of the significant areas of modern linguistic research due to the growing interest in the relationship between language, cognition, and culture. Within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, language is viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a system closely connected with human thought, conceptualization, and cultural experience. In this regard, phraseological units occupy a special position because they preserve figurative meanings, historical memory, and national worldview within stable lexical structures.

English literary texts provide rich material for the investigation of phraseological phenomena because literary discourse reflects both the creative potential of language and the cognitive processes involved in meaning construction. Writers frequently employ idiomatic expressions, metaphorical phrases, and fixed combinations to intensify emotional impact, create stylistic individuality, and express implicit meanings. Such expressions often function beyond their direct semantic interpretation and require cognitive processing based on associative thinking, cultural background, and contextual analysis.

In recent years, scholarly attention has shifted from purely structural descriptions of phraseological units toward their cognitive and discursive functions. Researchers increasingly emphasize that phraseological expressions represent conceptual models through which people organize knowledge and interpret reality. This perspective allows phraseology to be studied as a dynamic phenomenon connected with mental representation, conceptual metaphor, and discourse creativity.

Despite numerous studies devoted to phraseology, the cognitive representation of phraseological units in English literary texts remains insufficiently explored, especially regarding the mechanisms of semantic transformation and contextual reinterpretation. Many previous investigations focused mainly on classification, structural stability, or stylistic usage, whereas the interaction between phraseological meaning and cognitive interpretation in literary discourse still requires deeper analysis.

The purpose of this article is to examine the cognitive nature of phraseological units in English literary texts and to identify their role in the formation of conceptual imagery and artistic meaning. The study aims to analyze the semantic and stylistic features of phraseological expressions, investigate their contextual transformations, and explain the cognitive mechanisms that underlie their interpretation in literary communication.

The theoretical and practical significance of the research lies in its contribution to the development of cognitive linguistics, phraseology, discourse analysis, and literary stylistics. The results may also be useful in the fields of translation studies, intercultural communication, and foreign language teaching, particularly in understanding and interpreting figurative language in literary texts.

Phraseological units represent one of the most expressive and cognitively significant layers of the English language. In literary discourse, they perform not only a communicative function but also a conceptual and aesthetic one. Their semantic complexity, figurative nature, and cultural specificity make them an important object of research within Cognitive Linguistics and discourse studies. The analysis of English literary texts demonstrates that phraseological units are deeply connected with human cognitive activity and reflect the mechanisms through which individuals conceptualize reality.

One of the central characteristics of phraseological units is their semantic indivisibility. The meaning of an idiomatic expression cannot usually be understood through the literal interpretation of its components. For example, expressions such as “break the ice,” “spill the beans,” or “hit the nail on the head” possess figurative meanings formed through metaphorical associations. In literary texts, such expressions create imagery and emotional intensity while simultaneously activating background cultural knowledge in the reader’s consciousness. This confirms the cognitive principle that meaning is constructed through conceptual associations rather than isolated lexical meanings.

The cognitive interpretation of phraseological units is closely related to the theory of conceptual metaphor developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. According to this theory, abstract concepts are understood through metaphorical projections based on human physical and cultural experience. Many English idioms originate from everyday activities, bodily experience, or social interaction, which allows speakers to comprehend complex emotional or psychological states through familiar conceptual patterns. Thus, phraseological units function as linguistic representations of mental models stored in human cognition.

Another important aspect revealed during the analysis is the role of phraseological units in literary characterization. Authors intentionally use idiomatic expressions to reflect the psychological state, social background, and emotional condition of characters. In dialogues, phraseological units contribute to naturalness and authenticity of speech, while in narrative descriptions they strengthen stylistic expressiveness and symbolic meaning. Literary writers often modify traditional idioms by changing lexical components, grammatical structure, or contextual environment. Such transformations produce additional semantic layers and increase interpretative complexity.

The study also demonstrates that phraseological units serve as carriers of cultural memory and national identity. Many English idioms preserve historical realities, social traditions, and collective cultural experience. Their interpretation therefore requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness. In literary discourse, these expressions help create a culturally marked artistic space that reflects the worldview of a particular linguistic community. From a cognitive perspective, this process illustrates how language accumulates and transmits cultural knowledge across generations.

Contextual analysis further shows that phraseological units in literary texts frequently undergo semantic reinterpretation. Writers creatively manipulate fixed expressions to achieve irony, ambiguity, emotional tension, or stylistic originality. As a result, phraseological units reveal a dynamic nature rather than functioning as completely fixed constructions. Their contextual flexibility allows authors to combine conventional meaning with individual artistic intention, which significantly enriches the semantic structure of literary discourse.

Moreover, phraseological units contribute to discourse cohesion and conceptual integration within a text. Repeated metaphorical patterns and idiomatic structures create associative links between episodes, characters, and themes. Through these mechanisms, literary discourse acquires conceptual unity and emotional depth. Readers interpret such expressions not only linguistically but also cognitively, relying on memory, imagination, and contextual inference.

The conducted analysis confirms that phraseological units represent a complex interaction between language, cognition, and artistic creativity. Their functioning in English literary texts demonstrates that idiomatic expressions are capable of organizing conceptual meaning, shaping emotional perception, and reflecting cultural values simultaneously. Therefore, phraseological units should be regarded not merely as stable lexical combinations but as cognitive-discursive instruments that actively participate in the creation of literary meaning.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that phraseological units constitute an essential component of English literary discourse and represent a complex interaction between language, cognition, and culture. The conducted analysis confirms that idiomatic expressions are not merely fixed lexical combinations but cognitive structures that reflect conceptual thinking, metaphorical perception, and collective cultural experience.

The research findings reveal that phraseological units perform multiple functions in literary texts. They enhance stylistic expressiveness, create vivid imagery, intensify emotional impact, and contribute to the formation of implicit meanings. Through metaphorical and associative mechanisms, these expressions activate conceptual models in the reader's mind, which allows literary discourse to achieve greater semantic depth and artistic originality.

The study also proves that the interpretation of phraseological units depends on cognitive and cultural knowledge. Their figurative meanings are understood through conceptual associations shaped by human experience, national traditions, and contextual factors. In this regard, phraseological units serve as important carriers of cultural memory and linguistic worldview.

Particular attention was devoted to the contextual transformation of phraseological expressions in literary texts. The analysis has shown that authors frequently modify traditional idioms to create irony, ambiguity, symbolism, and individual stylistic effects. Such transformations demonstrate the dynamic nature of phraseological units and their ability to generate new semantic and pragmatic meanings within discourse.

The scientific significance of the research lies in its integrated cognitive-discursive approach to phraseological analysis. Unlike traditional linguistic studies focused mainly on structural or semantic classification, this work examines phraseological units as mechanisms of conceptual representation and artistic cognition. The obtained results contribute to the further development of Cognitive Linguistics, phraseology, discourse analysis, and literary stylistics.

In practical terms, the findings may be applied in foreign language teaching, translation studies, intercultural communication, and literary interpretation. Understanding the cognitive nature of phraseological units can facilitate more effective comprehension of figurative language and improve the interpretation of literary texts in both academic and educational contexts.

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