

Cognitive Analysis of Allusive Units in English and Uzbek Languages

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Abstract:

This article presents a comparative cognitive analysis of allusive units in English and Uzbek. Allusive units are linguistic expressions that indirectly refer to another text, historical figure, literary character, or cultural event. From a cognitive linguistics perspective, such units activate mental structures such as frames, scripts, and concepts. The article analyzes allusive units from English that include ancient mythology, the Bible, Shakespeare, modern cinema, and Uzbek literature, which analyzes classical Oriental literature, folk epics, Islamic sources, and Uzbek cinema with numerous examples. The comparative analysis reveals that while the frame mechanism operates identically in both languages, the source bases and cultural contexts differ fundamentally. Translation problems and strategies for rendering allusive units are also discussed.

Keywords: Allusion, Cognitive Linguistics, Concept, Frame, Script, National-Cultural Specificity, English, Uzbek, Translation Strategies.

Introduction

In modern linguistics, text comprehension is understood not merely as decoding linguistic codes but as activating cultural and encyclopedic knowledge. From this perspective, allusion occupies a special place. Allusion (from Latin *allusio* – hint, suggestion) is an indirect reference within one text to another text, historical event, literary character, or religious-mythological image. Allusive units are concise yet semantically dense, carrying a large volume of cultural and informational weight.

In cognitive linguistics, allusion is viewed as a signal that activates a specific conceptual structure (frame, script, or schema). A single name or expression can trigger a complex chain of events, a system of characters, and evaluative mechanisms in the listener's or reader's mind.

Therefore, proper understanding of allusive units depends on the language user's background knowledge and cultural competence [1].

The aim of this article is to comparatively analyze the cognitive mechanisms of allusive units in English and Uzbek, to reveal their national-cultural characteristics, and to propose solutions to translation problems.

The object of research allusive phrases, names, and referential units drawn from English and Uzbek [2].

Methodology

The subject of research is the cognitive structure of these units, their analysis based on frames and concepts. In this article, cognitive analysis, componential analysis, comparative description, and conceptual modeling are analyzed according to the methodology of linguistics [3].

In modern linguistics, cognitive linguistics studies language in close connection with human thought, knowledge, and perception. Within this paradigm, knowledge is stored and processed in various structures. This structure's study frame, script, concept, and all examples are related to the allusion analyzed according to this structure. Frame – a structured set of knowledge about a particular situation [4]. For example, the “*hospital*” frame includes components such as a doctor, patient, medicine, ward, and nurse. Script – dynamic knowledge about a sequence of events over time. For example, the “*restaurant dining*” script: entering – sitting – viewing the menu – ordering – paying – leaving. Concept – a mental unit reflecting a fragment of the world, a basic unit of culture. Allusive units act as “*triggers*” for such conceptual structures. A single name or expression can activate an entire frame, bringing forth the evaluations, attitudes, and meanings encoded within it [5].

Example: The English expression “*Pandora's box*” activates the following frame: [closed container – prohibition – temptation to open – opening – release of all evils – only hope remains]. Through this frame, the meaning “source of unexpected disasters” is conveyed. The Uzbek expression “*Qobilning hasadi*” (Cain’s envy) activates a similar frame: [elder brother Cain – younger brother Abel – sacrifice – envy – murder – first blood]. This frame expresses the meaning “tragedy resulting from envy” [6].

Thus, the cognitive approach allows allusive units to be studied not as superficial linguistic forms, but requires study according to deep mental representations.

The English language has a rich and multi-layered fund of allusions, based primarily on three sources: ancient mythology, the Bible, Shakespeare, and English literature, in addition we can add modern cinema and political culture to this list of sources. Ancient mythology is formed with the oldest and most stable layer of allusive units in English [7].

Example 2: *Herculean task*

Source: The 12 labors of the Greek hero Heracles (Hercules).

Frame: [superhuman strength – arduous task – success through strength and intelligence].

Meaning: “an extremely difficult task requiring great effort.”

Usage: “*Cleaning up the oil spill was a Herculean task*” [8].

Example 3: *Trojan horse*

Source: The legend of the Trojan War.

Frame: [hidden soldiers – entering the city as a gift – night attack – destruction from within].

Meaning: “cunning trick,” “something given with harmful intent.”

Usage: “*The software update turned out to be a Trojan horse.*” Not every reader can comprehend this allusion units [9].

To understand these units, the listener must have the mythological frame already present in their mind. Otherwise, the expression remains literal. This is why ancient mythology is taught systematically in English-speaking schools.

Results and Discussion

As the Bible is the foundational text of Western culture, and this book is considered as the source of numerous allusive units. Biblical allusions are so deeply rooted in English that they are often used outside religious contexts. Knowledge of them is essential for full comprehension of English texts [10].

Example 1: *Good Samaritan*

Source: Bible, Luke 10:25-37.

Frame: [traveler – robbers – left wounded – religious leaders refuse help – member of hostile nation (Samaritan) provides aid].

Meaning: “person who helps in difficult times,” “unexpectedly kind person.”

Usage: “*A good Samaritan stopped to help me change my tire*” [11].

Example 2: *Prodigal son*

Source: Bible, Luke 15:11-32.

Frame: [son – asks for inheritance and leaves home – squandering – poverty – repentance father's forgiveness and embrace].

Meaning: “repentant person who returns after straying.”

Usage: “*The prodigal son returned home after years of traveling*” [12].

There are several literary in English literature where we can come across with numerous allusion units. In our article we used William Shakespeare's works which have contributed hundreds of expressions and names to the English language. In addition, William Shakespeare's works is rich with literary allusion units. Authors like Shakespeare and Orwell have created entire systems of frames. By referring to them, a writer can express complex ideas concisely and expressively.

Example 1: *To be or not to be*

Source: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 3.

Frame: [life – death – choice – suffering – uncertainty – hesitation].

Meaning: “decisive hesitation before a crucial choice.”

Usage: “*The question of whether to change careers was his to be or not to be.*”

Example 2: *Romeo*

Source: Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*.

Frame: [young lover – feuding family – secret wedding – death for love – fidelity].

Meaning: “faithful, passionate, self-sacrificing lover.”

Usage: “*He's a real Romeo – he sends flowers every day*” [13].

Throughout history, there are thousands of allusion units in ancient mythology, English literature, and other English literary works. All these allusion units have been changed and adapted to modern life for many years. Cinema, television, and politics are considered as the culture of modern life, and still continue to generate new allusive units.

Example 1: *Watergate*

Source: U.S. political scandal, 1972-1974.

Frame: [break-in – cover-up – witnesses – journalists – resignation – subsequent scandals take “-gate” suffix].

Meaning: “political scandal” (as a derivational element).

Usage: “*The scandal became known as Iran Gate.*”

Example 2: *Jump the shark*

Source: TV series *Happy Days* (1977, Fonzie episode).

Frame: [successful series – bizarre episode (jumping over a shark) – decline – subsequent low-quality episodes].

Meaning: “to pass the peak of quality,” “beginning of decline.”

Usage: “*Many fans think the show jumped the shark after season 3*” [14].

Uzbek is a rich Turkic language spoken by over 50 million people. Its richness is best demonstrated through its allusive units – concise expressions that activate entire cultural frames from classical literature like Navoi, folk epics Alpomish, and Islamic sources. The ability to convey complex meanings through such allusions places Uzbek among the world’s culturally saturated languages, alongside Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. Shakespeare was example of English literature and in Uzbek language Alisher Navoi’s work is one of the example of Uzbek literature, so Navoi’s work and epic is given as example of allusion units in this article. In addition, Uzbek allusive units primarily draw on classical Oriental literature, folk epics like Alpomish, Manas, Rustam, Qur’an, hadiths, stories of prophets are Islamic sources, and Shum bola, Abdullajon, Masharaboz, O’tgan kunlar Uzbek cinema heritage.

Example 1: *Farhod*

Source: Navoi’s epic *Farhod and Shirin* (adapted from Khusraw Dehlavi and Nizami Ganjavi, perfected by Navoi).

Frame: [stonecutter – love – cutting through a river – tunneling through mountains – “I carved stones for Shirin” – physical labor for love – self-sacrifice – tragic death].

Meaning: “self-sacrificing and faithful lover,” “person ready for any difficulty for love.”

Usage: “*Yana bir Farhod topildi?*” (Has another Farhod been found?) – implying a new, self-sacrificing lover has appeared.

Historical figures form the basis of many stable expressions and characterizing units in Uzbek. Folk epics preserve the epic memory of the Uzbek people.

Example 1: *Amir Temur* (known in Europe as *Amir Timur* or *Tamerlane*)

Source: Founder of the Timurid Empire, great commander and ruler (1336-1405).

Frame: [throne – justice – power – generosity – crushing enemies – high purpose – ruler of seven climes].

Meaning: “great ruler,” “just and powerful leader.”

Usage: “*Amir Temurdek adolatli bo’l.*” (Be as just as Amir Temur).

Example 1: *Alpomish*

Source: Epic *Alpomish* (exists in both Karakalpak and Uzbek versions).

Frame: [hero – choosing a horse – wooing a girl – battle (against the Kalmyks) – captivity, seven years in prison – return – revenge – wife’s fidelity – “Bo’ri bilan yo’l yurdi, Oysuluv”].

Meaning: “national hero,” “faithful, brave, and intelligent warrior.”

Usage: “*Alpomishdek botir yigit.*” (A brave young man like Alpomish).

Epics reflect the worldview of the Uzbek people, including concepts such as bravery, loyalty to one’s word, friendship, enmity, patience, and patriotism. The Alpomish frame includes not only courage but also intelligence, patience, fidelity to one’s wife, and love of homeland.

Uzbek cinema, especially during the Soviet era and subsequent years, has created several memorable characters. Uzbek cinematic characters, mostly created during the Soviet period, reflect such traits of the Uzbek people as humor, bravery, simplicity, and honesty. However, for generations born after 1990, these allusions are becoming increasingly obscure.

Example 1: *Abdullajon*

Source: Film *Abdullajon* (director G’ani Aripov).

Frame: [country youth – getting lost in the city – simple – honest – inability to adapt to the system – being crushed – laughter and pity].

Meaning: “simple, honest person who cannot adapt to life.”

Usage: “*Hali ham Abdullajonligini tashlamabsiz.*” (You still haven't left that Abdullajon-like simplicity).

While comparing cognitive analysis of English and Uzbek allusive units we can come across to common features and differences and the problem of translating allusion units. Frame mechanism, national heroes, religious sources and evaluate function are common features of English and Uzbek allusive units.

1. *Frame mechanism*: operates identically in both languages: a short name or expression activates a whole chain of situations, evaluations, and events.
2. *National heroes*: play an important role in both languages:
English: Robin Hood, King Arthur, Shakespeare's characters.
Uzbek: Alpomish, Farhod, Amir Temur.
3. *Religious sources*: exist in both languages:
English: the Bible (Jesus, Moses, David, Abraham).
Uzbek: the Qur'an and hadiths (Adam, Cain and Abel, Solomon, Prophet Muhammad).
4. *Evaluative function*: in both languages, allusions are used to praise or criticize.

Ancient sources, main literary source, folk folklore, cinema, popular culture, political allusion, and geographical spread are the Table 1. differences between English and Uzbek allusion units.

Table 1. English and Uzbek allusion units.

Aspect	English	Uzbek
Main literary source	Shakespeare, Dickens, Byron	Alisher Navoi, Jami, Bedil
Cognitive load	Very wide conceptual frames	Frames relatively narrow
Geographical spread	Global (understood worldwide)	Regional

In cognitive linguistics, translation is the process of replacing a source-language frame with an equivalent target-language frame. Several strategies are used for translating allusive units:

Strategy 1: Preservation (calque + explanation)

The source-language allusive unit is translated literally, and an explanation is added.

Example: “*Trojan horse*” → “Trojan horse” (explanation: in Greek mythology, a wooden horse containing hidden soldiers).

Drawback: the explanation can make the text heavier [15].

Conclusion

In both English and Uzbek, allusive units operate through the same frame mechanism: a short name activates a complex set of situations, evaluations, and event sequences. The source bases of allusive units differ fundamentally: English relies on Ancient Greco-Roman mythology, the Bible, Shakespeare, and Hollywood; Uzbek relies on classical Oriental literature (Navoi), folk epics, Islamic sources, and Uzbek cinema. Due to national-cultural specificities, an allusive unit from one language often loses part of its frame when translated into the other language, or requires explanation. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the study of allusions is important not only for linguistics but also for intercultural communication and translation theory. Future research could explore the dynamic creation of new allusive units in digital communication (social media, memes, messaging apps) in both languages, as well as experimental studies measuring how quickly and accurately

different generations recognize traditional allusions.

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