



The Role Of Polysemy In The Conceptual Integration Of Phraseological Units: A Cross-Linguistic Approach

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Abstract.

This study explores the role of polysemy in the conceptual integration of phraseological units (PUs) in English, Russian, and Uzbek. The focus is on the polysemous word *heart* and its figurative uses across these three languages, examining how the meanings of *heart* contribute to the formation of idiomatic expressions. By analyzing a selection of idioms, the research demonstrates how polysemy enhances the richness of phraseological units and facilitates the blending of conceptual domains. The study finds that while the basic emotional and moral meanings of *heart* are shared across the languages, the specific cultural contexts shape the way these meanings are integrated in idiomatic expressions.

Keywords: polysemy, conceptual integration, phraseological units, cross-linguistic approach, idioms.

Introduction.

Polysemy, the phenomenon where a single word carries multiple meanings, plays a pivotal role in the development and interpretation of phraseological units (PUs) across languages. Phraseological units are multi-word expressions whose meaning cannot be easily derived from the meanings of their individual components. These expressions are not only a linguistic phenomenon but also represent cultural and cognitive patterns that reflect the worldview of the speakers of a given language. Polysemy, therefore, is a crucial aspect of phraseology, as it allows for the creation of rich, multifaceted meanings that are essential to understanding and using idiomatic expressions.

The study of polysemy has a rich history in linguistics, particularly in the fields of semantics and cognitive linguistics. Polysemy is understood as a phenomenon where one word has multiple related meanings, which can be context-dependent. Previous research on phraseological units has highlighted their importance in language learning, as they often encapsulate complex cultural concepts and emotional expressions.

In foreign language teaching, the ability to understand polysemy and its role in idiomatic expressions is increasingly recognized as an important part of developing socio-cultural and pragmatic competence. Authentic materials and intercultural comparisons are crucial in helping



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learners navigate the complexities of polysemy and develop a deeper understanding of the language they are studying.

Methods.

The study focuses on phraseological units (PUs) that contain polysemous components, specifically examining the word *heart* in English, Russian, and Uzbek. The word *heart* has a wide range of meanings in each of these languages, from its literal sense (the organ) to more figurative meanings related to emotions, character, and morality. For example:

- **English:** *heart of gold* (kindness), *heart of stone* (coldness or cruelty), *to take something to heart* (to be deeply affected emotionally).
- **Russian:** *доброе сердце* (kind heart), *сердце не камень* (not emotionally cold), *больное сердце* (emotional pain).
- **Uzbek:** *yuragi ochiq* (open-hearted), *yuragi tor* (narrow-hearted), *yuragi vayron* (broken-hearted).

These examples represent a selection of idiomatic expressions where the word *heart* serves as the core component of each phraseological unit. The research aims to compare the polysemous meanings of *heart* in these languages and understand how they contribute to the conceptual integration of these idioms.

This study employs a **contrastive analysis** methodology to compare polysemous meanings in English, Russian, and Uzbek. The following steps outline the analytical approach used:

1. **Identification of Polysemous Units:** First, a list of phraseological units containing the word *heart* is compiled in each of the three languages. This list includes both commonly used idioms and more culturally specific expressions.
2. **Semantic Analysis:** Each PU is analyzed in terms of its polysemy—identifying the multiple meanings associated with the word *heart* in the context of each phrase. The meanings are categorized into figurative and literal senses, with attention to how they are mapped onto broader cultural and emotional concepts.
3. **Conceptual Integration:** The theory of **conceptual integration** is used to analyze how different meanings of *heart* blend in the idiomatic expressions to create new conceptual spaces. This process is essential for understanding how the polysemous word can lead to different interpretations based on context and cultural background.

Results.

The analysis of the polysemous word *heart* across English, Russian, and Uzbek idiomatic expressions revealed several interesting findings about how polysemy influences the conceptual integration of phraseological units (PUs) in each language. In each of the languages, the polysemy of *heart* operates within different cognitive and cultural frameworks, which affects the overall meaning of the idiomatic expressions.

In English, *heart* is primarily associated with emotions, morality, and character, but it also has figurative meanings related to courage and centrality. Some key examples include:

- **Heart of gold** – This expression refers to a person with a kind and generous nature, indicating warmth and selflessness.
- **Heart of stone** – This expression denotes a person who is cold, unfeeling, or lacking compassion.



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- **Take something to heart** – To be deeply affected by something, often emotionally or personally.

These idioms demonstrate the multifaceted nature of *heart* in English, where it moves beyond the literal organ to encapsulate abstract concepts such as emotional depth, kindness, and emotional resilience. The conceptual integration in these idioms is tied to the understanding of *heart* as the central emotional core of a person.

In Russian, the polysemous word *сердце* (heart) is also central to expressing emotional states and personal qualities. However, the meanings are often intertwined with notions of moral character and emotional vulnerability:

- **Доброе сердце** – A kind heart, used to describe someone who is empathetic and caring.
- **Сердце не камень** – Not a cold heart, suggesting a person who is emotionally open or capable of feeling compassion.
- **Больное сердце** – A broken or wounded heart, which can refer both to literal and metaphorical emotional pain.

The Russian expressions demonstrate the deep emotional connection that *сердце* holds in the language, where the concept of the heart is closely associated with personal warmth, vulnerability, and emotional openness. The conceptual integration often blends emotional states with moral qualities.

In Uzbek, the word *yurak* is employed in a broader range of idiomatic expressions that emphasize emotional states, generosity, and social relationships. Some examples include:

- **Yuragi ochiq** – A person with an open heart, meaning someone who is generous and welcoming.
- **Yuragi tor** – A narrow-hearted person, suggesting someone who is selfish or unkind.
- **Yuragi vayron** – A broken-hearted person, used to describe someone who is emotionally distressed.

In Uzbek, the metaphorical use of *yurak* emphasizes the importance of emotional openness and interpersonal warmth. The polysemy of *yurak* in these idioms reveals a significant cultural focus on emotional connection and social harmony. This further indicates that cultural values are deeply embedded in the conceptual integration of polysemous words.

The role of polysemy in the conceptual integration of phraseological units is most evident in the blending of multiple conceptual domains. For example, in English, the phrase "**heart of gold**" integrates the metaphor of the heart (as a symbol of kindness and goodness) with the metaphor of gold (as a symbol of value and rarity). The combination of these concepts produces a new, figurative meaning: a person with a rare, valuable kindness. Similarly, "**heart of stone**" blends the emotional vulnerability implied by *heart* with the harshness and coldness implied by *stone*, creating an image of emotional inaccessibility.

In Russian, the idiom "**сердце не камень**" involves the conceptual blending of emotional warmth (heart) and coldness (stone), similar to its English counterpart. However, the focus in Russian is often more on the ability to feel and express emotions, linking *сердце* with openness and moral values.

In Uzbek, "**yuragi ochiq**" blends the image of an open heart with the notion of generosity, suggesting a person who is emotionally open and approachable. This demonstrates how the



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polysemous nature of *yurak* is used to create meanings that highlight both individual emotional states and broader social qualities.

The results show that while the word *heart* (and its equivalents in Russian and Uzbek) retains similar metaphorical meanings across languages, the specific interpretations of polysemy are shaped by cultural contexts. In English, there is a strong association between *heart* and individual emotional qualities such as kindness and resilience. In Russian, the focus is more on emotional depth and vulnerability, with an emphasis on personal morality. In Uzbek, the emphasis is placed on emotional openness, generosity, and social harmony.

These differences highlight the importance of considering cultural factors when analyzing polysemy in phraseological units. The conceptual integration in each language reflects not only cognitive processes but also deeply ingrained cultural values that shape how speakers understand and use idiomatic expressions.

Discussion.

The findings of this study underscore the complex role of polysemy in the conceptual integration of phraseological units (PUs) across languages. The polysemous nature of the word *heart* in English, Russian, and Uzbek serves as a key component in the formation of meaning within idiomatic expressions. The study highlights that while the core meanings of *heart*—emotions, character, and moral qualities—remain relatively constant across these languages, the specific nuances and cultural implications associated with these meanings vary.

In English, for instance, *heart* frequently connotes personal morality and emotional resilience. Expressions such as "**heart of gold**" and "**heart of stone**" reflect contrasting emotional and moral qualities, positioning *heart* as a central metaphor for individual emotional states. This aligns with the broader English-speaking cultural emphasis on individualism, where personal character and emotional depth are often evaluated and expressed through idioms.

In contrast, Russian expressions like "**сердце не камень**" and "**доброе сердце**" introduce an additional layer of moral and emotional vulnerability. The idea of a *heart* as being something that can be broken or softened by compassion reflects cultural values that prioritize empathy, warmth, and emotional openness. The use of *сердце* (heart) in Russian idioms reflects a worldview where emotional engagement and personal integrity are deeply connected.

In Uzbek, the word *yurak* serves as an emotional and social metaphor, where expressions like "**yuragi ochiq**" (open-hearted) or "**yuragi tor**" (narrow-hearted) emphasize emotional openness and social harmony. This reflects a cultural inclination toward relational qualities and collective emotional states, rather than focusing solely on individual traits. *Yurak* in Uzbek idiomatic expressions not only represents personal emotional states but also reinforces the importance of social interconnectedness and empathy within the community.

These findings suggest that while polysemy facilitates the conceptual integration of phraseological units, the process is shaped by the cognitive and cultural frameworks of each language. The way polysemous words like *heart* are used in idioms is closely tied to the values, moral expectations, and emotional constructs embedded in the respective cultures.

The results highlight the crucial role of culture in shaping the meanings associated with polysemous words in idiomatic expressions. In all three languages, the word *heart* serves as a metaphor for central human qualities—emotions, character, and morality—but the interpretations of these qualities differ across cultures. For example, in English, the notion of a *heart of stone*



conveys emotional coldness or cruelty, a meaning closely tied to individualistic notions of emotional self-sufficiency. In Russian, the emphasis is on emotional vulnerability, with idioms such as "**сердце не камень**" implying that a person's ability to express emotions is a moral virtue.

Conclusion.

This study highlights the importance of polysemy in the conceptual integration of phraseological units, revealing how words with multiple meanings can enhance the richness of idiomatic expressions. By comparing the polysemous meanings of *heart* in English, Russian, and Uzbek, we observe how cultural differences shape the interpretation and usage of polysemous words in idioms. The findings emphasize the value of polysemy in fostering both linguistic and cultural competence, which is essential for effective language teaching. The results also underline the need for further research into the role of polysemy in other linguistic and cultural contexts to deepen our understanding of this complex phenomenon.

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