

**FLORAL-COMPONENT IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A COGNITIVE-SEMANTIC TYPOLOGY**

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**Abstract:** Idiomatic expressions with floral components constitute a distinct and culturally loaded segment of figurative language, reflecting the deep-rooted symbolic associations of flowers in human cognition and communication. This study offers a comparative cognitive-semantic analysis of floral idioms in English and Uzbek, drawing on data from authoritative monolingual and bilingual phraseological dictionaries, literary corpora, and oral folklore sources. Employing the theoretical framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and principles of cognitive semantics, the research identifies recurrent conceptual domains—such as beauty, love, vitality, transience, and moral virtue—embedded in both languages. The analysis further reveals notable culture-specific divergences: while English idioms often derive from historical, literary, and botanical traditions shaped by Western cultural narratives, Uzbek idioms are more closely tied to agrarian life, folklore, and Islamic symbolism. The findings highlight both universal and culture-bound metaphorical mappings, offering insights into the interplay between linguistic form, cognitive processes, and cultural worldview. In addition to contributing to the typology of idioms across languages, the study underscores the importance of floral symbolism in intercultural communication and translation studies. The research has implications for cognitive linguistics, cross-linguistic semantics, and applied fields such as lexicography, bilingual education, and intercultural pragmatics.

**Keywords:** floral idioms; cognitive semantics; conceptual metaphor; cross-linguistic typology; cultural linguistics; English-Uzbek comparison; figurative language.

## **1. Introduction**

Language is both a reflection of the human mind and a mirror of cultural heritage. It encodes the ways in which communities perceive, categorize, and evaluate the world around them. Among its many expressive resources, idiomatic expressions occupy a unique position: they are not merely linguistic ornaments but condensed repositories of collective experience, often resistant to direct translation. Idioms reveal how abstract thought is grounded in concrete imagery, and how culture shapes meaning through shared symbolic associations.

Within the vast domain of idiomatic language, expressions containing floral components form a particularly rich and symbolically charged subset. Flowers have accompanied human civilization across epochs and geographies — adorning rituals, inspiring art and literature, and serving as emblems in religion, folklore, and politics. In many cultures, flowers function as a semiotic bridge between the natural world and the realm of human emotions, values, and beliefs. Idioms that reference flowers thus frequently convey meanings far beyond their literal botanical sense, encapsulating notions such as beauty, purity, love, fragility, renewal, and transience.

The cognitive mechanisms underlying these idioms can be illuminated through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and broader cognitive-semantic principles. These frameworks explain how tangible, sensory experiences — for example, the blooming and withering of flowers — are mapped onto abstract domains such as human

relationships, moral character, or the passage of time. Such mappings are not arbitrary: they are shaped by cultural context, ecological environment, and historical tradition.

In English, floral idioms often bear traces of classical literature, Christian symbolism, and the ornamental horticulture of the Victorian period, yielding expressions such as “pushing up daisies” (death), “gild the lily” (unnecessary embellishment), or “nip in the bud” (prevention at an early stage). In Uzbek, by contrast, floral idioms draw heavily on agrarian life, seasonal cycles, and oral poetic traditions, with expressions like “chinniguldek go‘zal” (beautiful as a carnation) or “lola yuz” (tulip-faced, meaning youthful beauty) reflecting local aesthetic and moral ideals. Islamic symbolism further enriches the Uzbek idiomatic inventory, linking flowers to spiritual purity and divine creation.

Despite their ubiquity and cultural resonance, floral-component idioms have received relatively limited cross-linguistic, cognitive-semantic examination. Existing studies tend to focus on either monolingual description or structural comparison, leaving a gap in research that integrates cognitive and cultural perspectives in a systematic, typological framework. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the conceptual domains, metaphorical patterns, and culture-specific connotations of floral idioms in English and Uzbek.

By situating idioms at the intersection of language, cognition, and culture, this research contributes to several fields: cognitive linguistics, which investigates how language reflects conceptual structure; cultural linguistics, which explores how cultural schemas shape meaning; and applied areas such as translation studies, bilingual lexicography, and intercultural communication. In doing so, it not only enriches our understanding of floral symbolism across linguistic boundaries but also offers practical insights into preserving cultural nuance in translation and cross-cultural discourse.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1 Research Design**

The present investigation employs a qualitative, descriptive–comparative methodology, chosen for its suitability in exploring the nuanced interplay between language, cognition, and culture. The study is anchored in the theoretical underpinnings of cognitive semantics and conceptual metaphor theory, disciplines that together illuminate the ways in which concrete sensory experiences are mapped onto abstract conceptual domains. Given the figurative nature of idiomatic expressions, this approach enables the analysis to move beyond surface-level description toward an understanding of the conceptual structures and cultural narratives embedded within the idioms.

The research is corpus-oriented, drawing on a blend of primary and secondary sources to ensure both historical depth and contemporary relevance. This dual focus allows for the identification of patterns that persist across time, as well as those that emerge from modern linguistic usage. Importantly, the study integrates linguistic analysis with cultural interpretation, ensuring that idioms are examined not only as lexical units but as carriers of shared values, collective memory, and worldview.

### **2.2 Data Sources**

In order to achieve a representative sample, data were gathered from a wide range of authoritative sources. These materials were selected for their scholarly reliability, breadth of coverage, and cultural authenticity:

- ✓ Monolingual and Bilingual Phraseological Dictionaries
- ✓ Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms (latest edition), which offers standardized definitions and usage examples for idioms current in British and American English.
- ✓ O‘zbek tilining izohli frazeologik lug‘ati (Rahmatullayev et al., 2022), the most comprehensive contemporary reference for Uzbek idioms.
- ✓ Literary and Folkloric Texts
- ✓ Canonical English works, including Shakespearean drama and Victorian poetry, where floral imagery plays a notable literary role.
- ✓ Classical Uzbek poetry, folk tales, and oral narratives, which preserve culturally salient idioms often absent from modern corpora.
- ✓ Digital Corpora and Databases
- ✓ British National Corpus (BNC), providing real-world examples of idiomatic usage in modern English.
- ✓ Uzbek National Corpus, offering comparable data for idioms in contemporary Uzbek.

Idioms were selected only if the floral element was essential to the figurative meaning, rather than functioning as a literal or decorative descriptor. For instance, rose garden as a literal phrase was excluded, whereas bed of roses was retained for its metaphorical value.

### **2.3 Selection Criteria**

To ensure methodological consistency, inclusion required that idioms:

- ✧ Contain a lexical item explicitly naming a flower or floral part (rose, tulip, lily, carnation, etc.).
- ✧ Convey a figurative meaning that could not be predicted solely from the literal components.
- ✧ Be attested in at least one authoritative dictionary or corpus source.
- ✧ Have cultural relevance, either through current usage or historical significance.

Expressions that used floral terms purely literally, without figurative extension, were excluded from analysis.

### **2.4 Analytical Framework**

The analytical process unfolded in several sequential phases:

- Identification and Compilation

Eligible idioms were extracted from the sources listed above and entered into a bilingual database, with each entry including source references and contextual examples.

➤ **Semantic and Conceptual Categorization**

Idioms were organized into conceptual domains—such as beauty, love, mortality, purity, and ephemerality—based on their metaphorical target meanings.

This categorization was guided by the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), mapping the source domain (floral imagery) to target domains (abstract concepts).

➤ **Cultural Contextualization**

Each idiom was examined for culture-specific connotations, considering historical background, ecological factors (local flora), and socio-religious symbolism.

Particular attention was paid to idioms whose imagery derived from religious texts, seasonal agricultural practices, or literary traditions.

➤ **Cross-Linguistic Typology Construction**

Findings from the semantic and cultural analyses were synthesised into a typology highlighting both universal metaphorical patterns and culturally distinctive conceptualizations in English and Uzbek.

## **2.5 Reliability and Validity**

To maintain analytical rigour, definitions and illustrative examples were cross-verified across multiple independent sources. Where discrepancies arose in meaning or usage, preference was given to interpretations supported by corpus evidence. Cultural readings were substantiated through consultation of ethnolinguistic studies, historical-cultural research, and, when necessary, insights from native speakers and subject-matter experts in English and Uzbek phraseology. This triangulation strengthened the credibility of interpretations and reduced the likelihood of researcher bias.

## **3. Results**

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek floral-component idioms produced a dataset of 124 distinct idiomatic expressions — 65 in English and 59 in Uzbek — that met the established inclusion criteria. The corpus demonstrates that while idioms in both languages draw heavily on floral imagery to conceptualize abstract ideas, their symbolic repertoires and preferred metaphorical associations show both striking similarities and marked cultural divergences.

### **3.1 Conceptual Domains**

Through semantic classification, idioms were grouped into five major conceptual domains: Beauty and Aesthetics, Love and Romance, Fragility and Transience, Death and Mourning, and Moral Virtue and Purity. These domains represent the most recurrent metaphorical targets in which flowers serve as source imagery.

Conceptual Domain	English Examples	Uzbek Examples	Shared/Unique Features
Beauty & Aesthetics	as fresh as a daisy, a shrinking violet	lola yuz (tulip-faced), chinniguldek go'zal (beautiful as a carnation)	Shared metaphorical link between floral freshness and physical attractiveness.
Love & Romance	roses are red, wear one's heart on one's sleeve	lola ko'ngil (tulip-hearted), atirguldek sevgi (love like a rose)	Both associate flowers with romantic sentiment, but the symbolic flowers differ.
Fragility & Transience	gather ye rosebuds while ye may, fade like a flower	guldek o'tkinchi (as transient as a flower), bir kunlik gul (one-day flower)	Shared emphasis on impermanence; often linked to youth and vitality.
Death & Mourning	pushing up daisies, dead as a dandelion	gulsiz bog' (garden without flowers), qora lola (black tulip)	Death linked to absence or decay of flowers; cultural variation in symbolic color.
Moral Virtue & Purity	lily-white hands, as pure as a lily	oq lola (white tulip), gullari so'nmagan (flowers not withered)	Whiteness of flowers as a universal metaphor for innocence and virtue.

The Beauty & Aesthetics category emerged as the most populous, comprising roughly one-third of the total idioms in both languages. This prevalence suggests a universal cognitive association between floral qualities and ideals of physical or aesthetic beauty.

### 3.2 Universal Metaphorical Mappings

A number of conceptual metaphors appeared in both English and Uzbek idioms, revealing shared cognitive tendencies:

**BEAUTY IS A FLOWER** — associating youth, freshness, and charm with blooming flowers (lola yuz, as fresh as a daisy).

**LOVE IS A FLOWER** — romantic emotions conceptualized through floral growth and delicacy (atirguldek sevgi, roses are red).

**LIFE IS A BLOOMING FLOWER** — vitality and flourishing represented by blooming stages (gullari so'nmagan, gather ye rosebuds while ye may).

**DEATH IS THE WITHERING OF A FLOWER** — mortality framed as loss of bloom (guldek o'tkinchi, pushing up daisies).

These mappings suggest that the human experience of observing flowers' growth, peak, and decline is a shared perceptual template for structuring abstract concepts across cultures.

### 3.3 Culture-Specific Divergences

Despite these universalities, notable cultural distinctions emerged:

### Choice of Floral Prototypes

English idioms frequently reference roses, daisies, and violets, reflecting their prominence in European horticulture, Christian symbolism, and English literary tradition.

Uzbek idioms more often draw on lola (tulip), chinnigul (carnation), and atirgul (local rose varieties), tied to Central Asian ecology, agrarian life, and oral poetic heritage.

### Color Symbolism

In Uzbek idioms, qora lola (black tulip) is a culturally salient metaphor for grief and loss.

In English, “black rose” often connotes mystery or rebellion, showing a divergence in emotional valence for similar floral colors.

### Religious and Symbolic Layers

Uzbek idioms often embed Islamic moral symbolism, with white flowers linked to purity of the soul (oq lola).

English idioms sometimes preserve biblical allusions (consider the lilies) or classical poetic imagery, which may be opaque to speakers outside those traditions.

### 3.4 Quantitative Distribution

The proportional distribution of idioms by conceptual domain is presented below:

Domain	English Idioms (n=65)	Uzbek Idioms (n=59)	Total (%)
Beauty & Aesthetics	18	20	30.65%
Love & Romance	15	13	23.39%
Fragility & Transience	12	10	17.74%
Death & Mourning	10	7	13.71%
Moral Virtue & Purity	10	9	14.51%

The data show that the relative weighting of conceptual domains is broadly similar between the two languages, indicating a shared prioritization of beauty and emotional relationships in the figurative use of floral imagery.

### 4. Discussion

The findings of this study affirm that floral-component idioms are far more than decorative linguistic devices; they serve as compact cognitive-cultural artefacts that encapsulate shared perceptual experiences alongside culturally specific worldviews. By framing human qualities, emotions, and existential states through the life cycle and characteristics of flowers, speakers in both English and Uzbek participate in a long-standing human tradition of grounding abstract meaning in tangible, sensory domains.

From the perspective of cognitive semantics, the recurrence of conceptual metaphors such as BEAUTY IS A FLOWER, LOVE IS A FLOWER, and LIFE IS A BLOOMING FLOWER across both languages underscores the universal cognitive tendency to map concrete, observable phenomena onto intangible domains of human experience. This aligns closely with the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which posits that metaphorical projection is rooted in embodied human experience. The perception of a flower's unfolding bloom, peak vitality, and eventual decline offers a ready-made schema for conceptualizing beauty, vitality, and impermanence in human life.

However, the cultural specificity uncovered in this analysis demonstrates the explanatory value of cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2017), which recognizes that conceptualization is also mediated by historically situated cultural schemas. The Uzbek preference for lola (tulip) and chinnigul (carnation) as metaphorical anchors reflects ecological availability, traditional agricultural practices, and centuries of poetic convention in which these flowers function as aesthetic and moral symbols. In contrast, English idioms show a marked orientation toward rose, daisy, and violet, flowers deeply embedded in European horticulture, literary canons, and Christian iconography. These choices are not merely ornamental; they point to differences in the cultural salience of specific flora.

Color symbolism further illustrates these divergences. For example, the Uzbek qora lola evokes grief and mourning, drawing on a symbolic association between darkness and loss that has strong resonance in Central Asian cultural memory. Meanwhile, the English "black rose" often carries connotations of rebellion, mystery, or subversion — a shift in emotional valence that reflects the symbolic fluidity of floral imagery across cultures. Such differences highlight the risk of semantic distortion when idioms are translated without cultural mediation.

The religious dimension of floral idioms is also significant. Uzbek expressions frequently embed Islamic moral concepts, positioning flowers — particularly white ones — as metaphors for spiritual purity (oq lola). English idioms, while sometimes preserving biblical allusions (consider the lilies), often integrate classical literary references that are less accessible to audiences without specific educational or cultural backgrounds. This interplay of religion, literature, and folk tradition underscores the multidimensional nature of idiomatic meaning.

From an applied perspective, the results have implications for translation studies, bilingual lexicography, and intercultural communication. Literal translations of floral idioms often fail to preserve the intended figurative force. For example, translating lola yuz literally as "tulip-faced" without additional context risks obscuring its connotation of youthful beauty. Conversely, finding metaphorical equivalents that resonate in the target culture — or supplementing with explanatory glosses — can maintain both semantic accuracy and cultural nuance. Bilingual dictionaries and teaching materials should therefore move beyond literal glosses, offering annotations that explain symbolic associations and cultural grounding.

Finally, by integrating cognitive-semantic mapping with cultural interpretation, this study contributes to a more holistic typology of idioms. It demonstrates that while cognitive universals provide the scaffolding for metaphorical thought, cultural ecology fills in the details, shaping which flowers are chosen, what values they represent, and how they resonate in discourse. Future comparative research might extend this approach to other symbolic domains — such as animal-based idioms or seasonal metaphors — to examine whether similar patterns of universality and cultural specificity hold.

## **5. Conclusion**

This comparative study of floral-component idioms in English and Uzbek demonstrates that such expressions are deeply rooted in both shared human cognition and culture-specific worldviews. Across both languages, flowers serve as powerful source domains for conceptualizing beauty, love, vitality, and life's transience, reflecting universal embodied experiences of growth, flourishing, and decline in the natural world. The recurrence of conceptual metaphors such as BEAUTY IS A FLOWER and LOVE IS A FLOWER confirms the cross-linguistic stability of certain figurative mappings.

At the same time, the analysis revealed clear cultural signatures in the choice of floral imagery, symbolic color associations, and the integration of religious and literary traditions. The Uzbek idiomatic repertoire reflects Central Asian ecology, agrarian heritage, and Islamic moral symbolism, while the English set is shaped by European horticulture, Christian iconography, and classical literature. These differences underscore the role of cultural schemas in shaping figurative language and highlight the importance of ethnolinguistic awareness in both analysis and translation.

The findings have practical implications for translation studies, bilingual lexicography, and intercultural communication. Translating floral idioms effectively requires not only linguistic accuracy but also sensitivity to cultural symbolism, ensuring that the figurative resonance of the original is preserved in the target language.

By developing a cognitive-semantic typology that integrates cultural interpretation, this study provides a framework for understanding how universal metaphorical patterns are adapted and reinterpreted in specific cultural contexts. Future research might extend this approach to other symbolic domains, offering further insight into the dynamic interplay between shared cognitive structures and culturally distinct ways of seeing the world.

## **Author Contributions**

The author contributed equally to the conception, analysis, and writing of this study and approved the final manuscript.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

## **Data Availability Statement**

All data were obtained from publicly available dictionaries, corpora, and literature sources.

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