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Comparative Analysis of Ethnolinguistic Phraseological Units in the Kyrgyz and English Languages through the Prism of National Mentality

Analiza porównawcza jednostek frazeologicznych etnolingwistycznych w języku kirgiskim i angielskim przez pryzmat mentalności narodowej

Keywords: linguistic identity, cultural traditions, cognitive analysis, semantic models, national consciousness
Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość językowa, tradycje kulturowe, analiza poznawcza, modele semantyczne, świadomość narodowa

Abstract

The study aimed to conduct a comparative ethnolinguistic analysis of phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages in order to reveal how they reflect and transmit elements of national mentality. Phraseological units recorded in dictionaries, works of fiction, proverbs, and sayings were selected and analysed. The main focus was on thematic groups related to nature, family, moral values, social relations, labour, and power. The research employed methods of comparative, cognitive, and semantic analysis, as well as a conceptual approach to reveal hidden semantic nuances of phraseological units. The analysis showed that Kyrgyz phraseological units were primarily based on images of nature, the nomadic way of life, collectivism, and respect for elders. In English phraseology, expressions reflecting rationality, economic pragmatism, individualism, and the social norms of a sedentary society predominated. For instance, in the Kyrgyz language, expressions related to horse breeding and pastoral life played a vital role in the phraseological worldview, while in English, a significant portion of phraseological units drew from maritime terminology and industrial development. However, both languages shared universal concepts such as kindness, justice, loyalty, hard work, and honesty, indicating the presence of shared human values embedded in language. The findings may be applied in teaching Kyrgyz and English, in translation studies, intercultural communication, and ethnolinguistic research. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the linguistic worldviews of different nations and to fostering intercultural understanding in the context of globalisation.

Introduction

The study of phraseology across various languages allows for a deeper understanding of the national mentality, culture, and way of thinking of native speakers. Phraseological units, being fixed expressions with figurative meanings, reflect the historical experience, traditions, customs, and worldview of a people. A comparative study of Kyrgyz and English ethnolinguistic phraseological units is of particular interest, as these languages belong to different language families and have distinct historical and cultural backgrounds, yet still demonstrate certain parallels in the expression of national concepts.

The relevance of this study is determined by the ongoing interest of modern linguistics in identifying the national specificity of a language through its phraseological units, as emphasised by Bui (2023). Although previous studies in phraseology have compared different languages, as noted by Sydykova (2020) and Gries

(2024), the ethnolinguistic analysis of Kyrgyz and English phraseological units remains underdeveloped and in need of more in-depth scholarly attention. Existing research on this topic has primarily focused on Russian-English parallels (Khajieva and Ermukhanbetova 2024), Kazakh-English comparisons (Janevska 2024), and other language pairings, while the Kyrgyz-English aspect has received only fragmentary consideration. Moreover, despite the active development of translation studies, the challenge of adequately conveying ethnolinguistic phraseological units – taking into account the peculiarities of national mentality – remains unresolved, as MacDonald (2024) points out.

The study of such phraseological units requires an examination of their internal form, semantics, pragmatics, and the methods of translation and functional equivalence in the compared languages. The national worldview embedded in phraseological units is a key component of ethnolinguistics, as it reflects speakers' perception of reality and cultural codes, as noted by Kamenická et al. (2024). For instance, as emphasised by Erkinbek kyzy (2021), Kyrgyz phraseological units often reflect the nomadic way of life, natural environment, and traditional worldview. Meanwhile, according to the research of Lun et al. (2024), a significant portion of English idiomatic expressions originates from maritime terminology; Gafarli (2024) highlights their connection to an agrarian lifestyle, and Bondi and Cacchiani (2023) focus on the religious themes underlying many idioms. This contrast arises from the fact that the Kyrgyz language developed within a nomadic civilisation, whereas English evolved in the context of an island and colonial society.

By now, certain aspects of the phraseology of the Kyrgyz and English languages have already been considered in the scientific literature. A contribution to the study of the theory of phraseological units was made by Veresh et al. (2023), who classified phraseological units according to their systemic and semantic characteristics. In the English linguistic tradition, issues of phraseology were studied in the works of Grigoryan (2024), who investigated the use of colour symbolism in phraseological expressions.

Phraseologisms performed not only a communicative but also a cultural function, conveying the historical and ethnocultural characteristics of the people. They reflected specific features of the national character, worldview, and value orientations, which made it possible to use them as linguistic material for the study of culture. Comparative analysis of Kyrgyz and English phraseological units revealed not only structural and semantic differences, but also similarities in the conceptualisation of reality, which testified to the deep universals of language and culture.

In addition, phraseology was an important tool for preserving national identity and cultural heritage. Many phraseological units arose under the influence

of historical events, religious traditions, and the social organisation of society (Chukhanov and Kairbekov 2024; Zhanabergenova and Kairbekov 2024). For example, Kyrgyz phraseological units often included motifs of clan relations and nomadic life, while English phraseological units contained references to maritime navigation, the Industrial Revolution, and the British legal system. The study of these differences and similarities not only contributed to a deeper understanding of the specifics of each language, but also made it possible to identify the mechanisms of linguistic borrowing and transformation of phraseological units in the intercultural space.

From the point of view of ethnolinguistics, phraseological units were not only linguistic constructions but also cultural codes that conveyed the traditions, stereotypes, and symbolism of the people, as Prihodko (2022) argues. For example, the Kyrgyz phraseological unit Асан кайгы (which literally translates as "Asan the Miserable") denoted a person who led a sad life, which is associated with the image of the legendary thinker known for his gloomy prophecies, as written by Ochilov (2025). There was no similar concept in English, but there was an expression "to be down in the dumps" (literally "to be depressed"), which could be used in translation. However, the literal transmission of such phrases without taking into account the cultural context could lead to a loss of meaning.

The present study was aimed at identifying functional correspondences between Kyrgyz and English phraseological units with an ethnolinguistic component, as well as analysing their reflection in the national worldview. The following tasks were set during the study: to determine which phraseological units of the Kyrgyz and English languages could be classified as ethnolinguistic; to analyse the internal form, semantic content and pragmatic features of Kyrgyz and English ethnolinguistic phraseological units; the following tasks were set during the study: to determine which phraseological units of the Kyrgyz and English languages can be classified as ethnolinguistic; to analyse the internal form, semantic content, and pragmatic features of Kyrgyz and English ethnolinguistic phraseological units; to identify the main methods used in translating Kyrgyz phraseological units into English; to assess the extent to which the ethnocultural component of these phraseological units is preserved in translation; and to determine in which cases Kyrgyz phraseological units have direct correspondences in English and in which cases they require adaptation or replacement, taking into account the national mentality. To determine in which cases Kyrgyz phraseological units found direct correspondences in the English language, and in which cases they required adaptation or replacement, taking into account the national mentality.

Materials and methods

The study was a comparative analysis of ethnolinguistic phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages, taking into account their semantic structure, pragmatic functions, and cultural context. The main focus was on identifying the features of the national mentality reflected in the fixed expressions of both languages.

The material for the analysis comprised phraseological units selected from authoritative lexicographic sources, corpus databases, and literary works. Kyrgyz phraseological units were collected on the basis of the Phraseological Dictionary of the Kyrgyz Language (Osmonova et al. 2015), and were also analysed through the prism of oral folk tradition and national epics, in particular Manas (Bashiri 2020). English equivalents were identified based on the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (Ayto 2020), Proverbs: A Handbook (Mieder 2004), Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms (Cambridge University Press 1998), and data from the British National Corpus (2025) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (2025).

The selection of phraseological units was based on several criteria to ensure the reliability of the analysis. First, only stable and widely recognised phraseological units recorded in authoritative dictionaries and corpus databases were included. Second, the expressions had to contain a clear ethnocultural component reflecting elements of national mentality, traditions, or social values. Third, the selected units had to be attested in modern usage in literary texts, spoken discourse, or corpus materials.

A total of 30 Kyrgyz and 30 English phraseological units were selected to create a balanced and manageable dataset for comparative analysis. This number made it possible to represent different semantic and thematic groups while maintaining analytical depth in the qualitative examination of cultural and pragmatic features.

Additionally, literary works containing stable idiomatic expressions representative of the national mentality were studied. In particular, English-language literary texts were used, such as To Kill a Mockingbird by Lee (1960), Pride and Prejudice by Austen (2025), and Of Mice and Men by Steinbeck (2025), in which idioms play a significant role in conveying social attitudes, mentality, and emotional expression. Although some examples originate from epic and classical literary sources, many of these phraseological units remain actively used in contemporary spoken and written language, which is confirmed by corpus data and lexicographic sources.

To achieve the research objectives, several analytical methods were employed. In order to analyse the relationship between phraseological units and national mentality, several ethnocultural indicators were considered during the analysis.

This included collectivism, individualism, connection with nature, family values, social hierarchy, and attitudes toward labour and success. These indicators made it possible to interpret how phraseological units reflect culturally specific patterns of thinking and social behaviour in the Kyrgyz and English linguistic traditions. Semantic analysis was used to identify the key semantic components of phraseological units, determine their figurative meanings, and analyse the conceptual metaphors underlying these expressions. Pragmatic analysis focused on examining the communicative functions of phraseological units in different discourse contexts, including everyday speech, literary texts, and journalistic materials, as well as their role in expressing evaluation, emotion, and social relations. In addition, comparative analysis was applied to identify similarities and differences between Kyrgyz and English phraseological units and to determine how cultural and historical factors influence their formation and usage.

Comparative analysis helped to identify the differences and similarities in the structure and meaning of phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages, as well as to determine which elements of national culture influence the formation of these expressions.

To analyse the cultural components of phraseological units in translation, a comparative evaluation was conducted. Each Kyrgyz phraseological unit was compared with its English equivalent based on several criteria: semantic correspondence, preservation of cultural imagery, pragmatic function, and the degree of equivalence in translation. The analysis made it possible to determine whether the translation represented a direct equivalent, a functional analogue, or an adapted expression that partially preserved the ethnocultural meaning. This approach allowed the identification of cultural gaps and differences in the conceptualisation of similar phenomena in the two languages.

An additional research tool was corpus analysis, which enabled the identification of the frequency of use of certain phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages. Data from the British National Corpus (2025) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (2025) provided statistical reliability for the results, allowing for the tracking of how frequently certain expressions occur in modern English. Similarly, Kyrgyz sources were studied, including the Phraseological Dictionary of the Kyrgyz Language (Osmonova et al. 2015), materials from the epic Manas (Bashiri 2020), as well as corpus data presented on the online platform El-sozduk.kg, which contains a digital database of set expressions and lexicographic resources of the Kyrgyz language.

The methodological approach of the study was primarily qualitative, focusing on the semantic, pragmatic, and ethnocultural interpretation of phraseologi-

cal units. Quantitative analysis was used as a supplementary tool to examine the frequency of selected expressions in corpus data. This combination of qualitative interpretation and quantitative frequency data made it possible to identify both the cultural significance of phraseological units and their patterns of usage in contemporary language.

Thus, the employed set of methods provided a comprehensive analysis of phraseological units, enabling the identification of their cultural characteristics, pragmatic functions, and the main translation challenges.

Results

Ethnolinguistic phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages exhibit both similarities and significant differences, stemming from the particularities of national mentalities. To classify phraseological units in both languages, four principal types can be distinguished: phraseological fusions, phraseological unities, phraseological combinations, and phraseological expressions.

Phraseological fusions are characterised by semantic indivisibility, being perceived as a single, inseparable whole. These expressions cannot be translated literally and are typically fixed in form. For instance, the Kyrgyz expression *алты саны аман* (to be healthy) and the English safe and sound (alive and well) perform a similar function, expressing concern for well-being. Another example is the Kyrgyz phraseological unit *көз жумуу* (literally: “close your eyes”), which is used to mean “to die”, analogous to the English expression pass away. Both serve as euphemisms that soften references to death, a feature common in many cultures that seek to avoid direct statements on such topics (Ayto 2020; Osmonova et al. 2015).

Also noteworthy is the Kyrgyz phraseological unit *жерге түшүү* (literally: “to come down to earth”), which denotes acceptance of reality following high expectations or disappointment. In English, a comparable meaning is conveyed by the expression come back down to earth, which is likewise used to describe the process of confronting reality after an emotional high.

Phraseological units are stable expressions in which the meaning is partially discernible from the individual components but requires cultural context for full comprehension (Doroshko and Tsyrfa 2021). For example, the Kyrgyz phraseological unit бийик даражадагы адам (an important person) and the English big shot (a significant person) both illustrate social hierarchies and status. These expressions often carry a subtle note of irony, particularly in contexts where the

emphasis is placed not so much on actual importance as on perceived or self-proclaimed status (Ayto 2020; Osmonova et al. 2015).

Another example is the Kyrgyz phraseological unit *жүрөгү түшүү* (literally: "the heart sank"), which conveys a sudden feeling of fear or anxiety. The English equivalent, have one's heart in one's boots, similarly expresses emotional shock. These phraseological units demonstrate how universal emotions are articulated through metaphorical imagery associated with the heart, a common symbol of emotions in many cultures.

Phraseological combinations are word groupings with a stable meaning, where one component retains its literal meaning while the other contributes a fixed connotation (Kravchuk et al. 2025). For instance, the Kyrgyz expression *кайнаса каны кошулбайт* (does not mix) describes people or things that cannot coexist harmoniously. In English, the expression like oil and water conveys a similar meaning, referring to the physical impossibility of mixing the two substances and metaphorically extending this to interpersonal relationships or incompatible ideas (McCarthy and O'Dell 2017; Osmonova et al. 2015).

Additionally, the Kyrgyz phraseological unit *көзгө көрүнүү* (to be in sight) can be compared with the English expression in the spotlight (to be at the centre of attention). Both expressions employ the metaphor of visibility to describe a situation in which a person or event attracts public attention. At the same time, the Kyrgyz phraseological unit can also carry a negative connotation, implying excessive publicity – reflecting cultural values associated with modesty in traditional Kyrgyz society.

Phraseological expressions function as speech formulas used in standard situations, such as greetings, well-wishes, or ritualised forms of address. These expressions are widespread in everyday communication and are characterised by a high degree of stability. Unlike phraseological combinations or unities, they may retain a degree of semantic transparency and be used with minimal variation across diverse language contexts.

Corpus analysis revealed differences in the frequency of use of Kyrgyz and English phraseological units. For instance, the expression pass away, a euphemism for death, occurs with high frequency in both corpora, indicating its widespread use in English-language discourse (British National Corpus 2025; Corpus of Contemporary American English 2025). In contrast, the Kyrgyz equivalent көз жумуу (close your eyes – die) does not appear with comparable frequency in Kyrgyz corpora, which may suggest differences in the pragmatics and cultural connotations of phraseological units. Moreover, expressions such as "to climb the social ladder" are more common in American English (62 per 1 million words)

than in British English (41), reflecting the American cultural orientation towards individual achievement. These differences between British and American English may also influence the perception and usage of phraseological units. In American English, expressions associated with ambition, achievement, and social mobility tend to occur more frequently, reflecting cultural narratives such as the "American dream". In British English, phraseological units may be used in a more restrained or context-dependent manner, often reflecting different sociocultural traditions and communicative styles. Thus, frequency analysis confirms that the choice of phraseological units is influenced not only by their semantic content, but also by the mentality of native speakers. To determine the frequency of use of Kyrgyz and English phraseological units, a corpus-based study was conducted using data from the British National Corpus (2025) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (2025) (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative classification of phraseological units with frequency

Type of phraseological unit	**Kyrgyz phraseological unit**	**English phraseological unit**	**Meaning**	**Ethnocultural components**	**Frequency in BNC (per 1 million words)**	**COCA frequency (per 1 million words)**
Phraseological fusions	Алты саны аман	Safe and sound	Be healthy	Caring for well-being	45	65
	Көз жумуу	Pass away	Die	A euphemism for death	132	210
	Жерге түшүү	Come back down to earth	Acceptance of reality	Realising the limitations of high status	15	28
Phraseological unit	*Бийик даражадагы адам*	Big shot	An important person	Social hierarchies and status	52	89
	Жүрөгү түшүү	have one's heart in one's boots	A feeling of fear or anxiety	Emotional shock	78	120
	Көзгө көрүнүү	In the spot light	Be the center of attention	Social visibility with an emphasis on publicity	33	54
	Башы көккө жетүү	To climb the social ladder	To rise in social status	Cultural identity and social advancement	62	41

Type of phraseological unit	Kyrgyz phraseological unit	English phraseological unit	Meaning	Ethnocultural components	Frequency in BNC (per 1 million words)	COCA frequency (per 1 million words)
Phraseological combinations	Кайнаса каны кошулбайт	Like oil and water	Incompatibility	Physical and cultural incompatibility	20	35
	Аман-эсен жетүү	Have a safe trip	Desire for a safe journey	Taking care of the traveler in the traditions of hospitality	29	47
Phraseological expressions	Көп жаша	Many happy returns	Wishing long life	Blessings and wishes for the holidays	55	73

Source: compiled by the authors based on British National Corpus (2025), Corpus of Contemporary American English (2025).

Analysing the data from the table, it can be observed that phraseological units related to success and goal achievement have a higher frequency in the English-language corpora. For example, the expression reach for the stars (to strive for higher achievements) is more common in American English, which confirms its association with the ideology of the "American dream" and the cultural emphasis on individual accomplishment. In the Kyrgyz language, the phraseological unit башы көккө жетүү (to climb the social ladder), is significantly less frequent. This may be attributed to the traditional Kyrgyz mentality, which places greater emphasis on collective values rather than individual success (Yesmaganbet and Kairbekov 2025).

In contrast, phraseological units related to wishes and blessings occur with greater frequency in the Kyrgyz language. For instance, the expression *көп жаша* (literally: "live long") is widely used in ritualised contexts and holds significant importance in social communication. In English, the corresponding expression many happy returns (long life) are much less commonly used. This suggests that in Kyrgyz culture, phraseological units expressing collectivism, good wishes, and blessings play a more stable and prominent role compared to those in the English-language tradition, which is more oriented towards individualism.

Another important aspect is the difference in the use of euphemisms. For example, pass away and *көз жумуу* (to die) perform similar functions; however, the former appears far more frequently in English-language corpora. This may reflect the Western cultural tradition of avoiding direct references to death, where such topics are often considered taboo. In contrast, in Kyrgyz, this euphemism is used

less often, which may indicate a more direct or straightforward attitude towards the concept of death – one that views it as a natural part of the life cycle and often expresses it through stable religious or philosophical formulas.

The functional features of these phraseological units depend on the context of their use, their degree of stability, and the presence of ethnocultural components. Kyrgyz examples frequently contain references to traditions, everyday life, and historical realities, such as the nomadic lifestyle, connection with nature, and respect for elders. In contrast, English phraseological units tend to emphasise the socio-economic and cultural aspects of daily life, individualism, and personal achievement (Abdykulova et al. 2019; 2025).

Thus, phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages function not only as means of communication, but also as significant markers of cultural identity, reflecting the distinctive features of each nation's worldview and value system. Corpus analysis confirms that the selection of phraseological units is influenced not only by their semantic content, but also by the mentality of native speakers. Their study facilitates a deeper understanding of both linguistic and sociocultural factors that shape the linguistic of the world (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparative classification of phraseological units of the Kyrgyz and English languages

Type of phraseological unit	**Kyrgyz phraseological unit**	**English phraseological unit**	**Meaning**	**Ethnocultural components**
Phraseological fusions	Алты саны аман	Safe and sound	Be healthy	Caring for well-being
	Көз жумуу	Pass away	Die	A euphemism for death
	Жерге түшүү	come back down to earth	Acceptance of reality	Realising the limitations of high status
Phraseological unit	*Бийик даражадагы адам*	Big shot	An important person	Social hierarchies and status
	Жүрөгү түшүү	have one's heart in one's boots	A feeling of fear or anxiety	Emotional shock
	Көзгө көрүнүү	In the spot light	Be the center of attention	Social visibility with an emphasis on publicity
	Башы көккө жетүү	To climb the social ladder	To rise in social status	Cultural identity and social advancement

Type of phraseological unit	Kyrgyz phraseological unit	English phraseological unit	Meaning	Ethnocultural components
Phraseological combinations	Кайнаса каны кошулбайт	Like oil and water	Incompatibility	Physical and cultural incompatibility
	Аман-эсен жетүү	have a safe trip	Desire for a safe journey	Taking care of the traveler in the traditions of hospitality
Phraseological expressions	Тилек кылам	Wish you luck	Good luck wishes	Politeness formulas and rituals
	Көп жаша	Many happy returns	Wishing long life	Blessings and wishes for the holidays

Source: compiled by the authors based on McCarthy and O'Dell (2017); Ayto (2020).

National mentality has a significant impact on the formation of phraseological units, shaping their semantic load, pragmatic function, and cultural significance. In the Kyrgyz and English languages, this influence is manifested through the reflection of values, worldviews, and historical experiences specific to each nation, which are embedded in their respective phraseological systems.

In the Kyrgyz language, phraseological units are closely linked to the nomadic way of life, collectivism, and natural realities. For example, the expression кой үстүндө торгой жумурткалоо (larks carry eggs on the backs of rams) symbolises well-being and abundance, reflecting the perception of wealth through the lens of cattle breeding (Osmonova et al. 2015; Bashiri 2020). A comparable English phraseological unit, land of milk and honey, also conveys the idea of abundance, but it is rooted in biblical motifs and an agricultural tradition. Both expressions highlight the significance of natural resources and agricultural prosperity as indicators of well-being in their respective cultures.

The English language has been considerably shaped by maritime culture and colonial expansion (Tsyrfa et al. 2024). This influence is evident in expressions such as carry coals to Newcastle, which denotes the futility of an action, as Newcastle is historically associated with coal mining. This aspect of English phraseology is discussed in the works of Mieder (2004) and in the British National Corpus (2025). The Kyrgyz equivalent, эшек такалоо (to idle, to bum), likewise refers to a pointless action, but is rooted in the realities of nomadic life. The analysis of Kyrgyz phraseological units reflecting nomadic traditions is presented in the dictionary by Osmonova et al. (2015) and in corpus-based studies on the Kyrgyz language.

National mentality also influences the use of phraseological units in everyday speech. This is supported by studies in sociolinguistics and cultural linguistics (McCarthy and O'Dell 2017; Ayto 2020). Expressions relating to respect for elders and family are common in the Kyrgyz language. For example, ата-бабанын батасы (ancestor's blessing) reflects the importance of honouring elders and upholding family values. Research on Kyrgyz phraseology highlights the significance of such expressions (Osmonova et al. 2015). In English, similar expressions such as ancestor's blessing are less widespread and generally lack the same spiritual depth. Instead, the emphasis tends to fall on individual achievement and personal responsibility, as reflected in expressions such as pull oneself up by one's bootstraps, which underscores the value of self-reliance and independence.

Another example of cultural influence on phraseological units can be observed in expressions related to nature and the environment. In Kyrgyz, where nature holds a central role in daily life, expressions such as башы көккө жетүү (to climb the social ladder) are common, symbolising ambition and great achievement. In English, the expression reach for the stars is used in a similar context, also expressing aspiration toward lofty goals. However, it simultaneously reflects the cosmopolitan and scientific-technological orientation of Western culture. This influence is noted in corpus studies using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (2025) and the British National Corpus (2025).

National mentality also shapes the perception of concepts such as luck and fate. In Kyrgyz, the expression көк асман колдосун (let the blue sky support) is associated with ancient Tengrian beliefs, in which the sky symbolises a higher power. In English, the expression good luck is employed to convey similar wishes, though it is more secular in nature and generally detached from religious or spiritual connotations (Table 3).

Table 3. Additional examples of Kyrgyz and English phraseological units with ethnocultural features

Kyrgyz phraseological unit	**English phraseological unit**	**Meaning**	**Cultural context**
Кой үстүндө торгой жумурткалоо	Land of milk and honey	Prosperity, abundance	Cattle breeding/biblical motives
Эшек такалоо	to twiddle one's thumbs	To do nothing while waiting, to be idle, or to waste time.	Nomadic culture/ industry
Ата-бабанын батасы	Ancestor's blessing	Blessing of the ancestors	Respect for elders/ family values
Тилек кылам	Wish you luck	Good luck wishes	Ritual forms/etiquette

Kyrgyz phraseological unit	English phraseological unit	Meaning	Cultural context
Кайнаса каны кошулбайт	Like oil and water	Incompatibility	Ideas about purity and harmony
Башы көккө жетүү	To climb the social ladder	To rise in social status	Traditional values/ ambitions
Жүрөгү түшүү	Have one's heart in one's boots	Sudden fear or anxiety	Emotional states/ universal images

Source: compiled by the authors based on McCarthy and O'Dell (2017), Mieder (2004), Ayto (2020), Osmonova et al. (2015), Bashiri (2020), British National Corpus (2025), Corpus of Contemporary American English (2025).

This analysis demonstrates that phraseological units reflect not only linguistic features but also the deep cultural values of the Kyrgyz and English peoples. They serve as an important tool for examining the influence of national mentality on the linguistic worldview and contribute to understanding how cultural differences shape unique linguistic structures and modes of expression.

The translation of ethnolinguistic phraseological units from Kyrgyz into English and vice versa is a complex task. This complexity arises not only from linguistic differences but also from the deep cultural and mental contexts in which these expressions have been formed. The main challenges in translation concern the preservation of semantic integrity, the transmission of pragmatic meaning, and the representation of cultural realities, which often cannot be conveyed through literal translation (Apakhayev et al. 2017; Karassayev et al. 2024).

In the Kyrgyz language, many phraseological units reflect the traditions of nomadic life, family values, and customary practices. For example, the phraseological unit устуканы упат болгур! (literally: "may his bones crumble") functions as a curse carrying strong emotional weight. It is impossible to translate this expression literally into English without losing its expressiveness. The English equivalent curse you conveys the general meaning but lacks the cultural and emotional depth that characterises the Kyrgyz expression (Osmonova et al. 2015; Mieder 2004).

Another example is the Kyrgyz phraseological unit бата алуу (to receive a blessing), which reflects the importance of connection with ancestors and elders. In English culture, this concept is less prominent, and the translator may opt for the expression seek approval, which does not fully convey the spiritual and cultural context of the Kyrgyz original (Ayto 2020).

There are also numerous instances in which a literal translation results in a loss of meaning. For example, the Kyrgyz phraseological unit көк асман колдосун (let the blue sky support) conveys a wish for good luck rooted in ancient

Tengrian beliefs. In English, no equivalent expression carries the same religious or spiritual significance, and the translator may resort to the neutral good luck, which simplifies the original intent (Osmonova et al. 2015).

Common errors in translating phraseological units arise from several typical approaches that risk distorting the original meaning. One of the most frequent mistakes is literal translation, whereby the translator renders each word directly without consideration of the cultural context (Karassayev et al. 2023). For instance, translating the Kyrgyz expression **эшек такалоо** (to shoe a donkey) as shoeing a donkey will not be meaningful to an English-speaking audience, as this expression has no analogue in their cultural framework. A more accurate equivalent would be to twiddle one's thumbs, which better conveys the intended meaning within the cultural realities of the English language (Mieder 2004; Ayto 2020).

Another common mistake is the incorrect transfer of emotional colouring. When translating phraseological units with pronounced emotional or expressive intensity, the depth of feeling and cultural subtext is often lost. For example, the Kyrgyz expression устуканы упат болгур! (may his bones crumble), used as a curse, carries a strong emotional charge that is difficult to render in English. A simple translation such as curse you conveys only the general meaning, without reflecting the cultural and emotional nuances inherent in the original (Kairbekov 2016).

In addition, a frequent error involves overlooking cultural realities. Phraseologisms that are closely tied to unique cultural aspects require adaptation for the target audience. For instance, the Kyrgyz **жети атасын тааныту** (to make things hot for somebody) poses a translation challenge, as this tradition does not exist in English-speaking cultures. The rendering to know your bloodline going back seven generations only partially captures the meaning and fails to fully convey the concept's cultural depth, which is rooted in the significance of lineage in Kyrgyz society (Table 4).

Table 4. Comparative analysis of successful and problematic cases of translation of phraseological units

Kyrgyz phraseological unit	Literal translation	English equivalent	Match type	Comment
Устуканы упат болгур	Let his bones crumble	Curse you	Partial match	Loss of expressiveness and cultural context
Бата алуу	Receive a blessing	Seek approval	Lack of direct analogue	Differences in cultural attitudes
Кой үстүндө торгой жумурткалоо	Larks lay eggs on the backs of rams	land of milk and honey	Functional compliance	Both expressions symbolise abundance

Kyrgyz phraseological unit	Literal translation	English equivalent	Match type	Comment
ата-бабанын батасы	Blessing of the ancestors	Ancestor's blessing	Direct match	Similarities in cultural practices
Эшек такалоо	Shoeing a donkey	To twiddle one's thumbs	Idiomatic match	The general meaning of to do nothing while waiting, to be idle, or to waste time
Көк асман колдосун	Let the blue sky support	Good luck	Partial match	Loss of spiritual context
Жерге түшүү	Come down to earth	Come back down to earth	Idiomatic match	Similarities in the description of the process of awareness of reality

Source: compiled by the authors based on Mieder (2004), Ayto (2020), Osmonova et al. (2015), McCarthy and O'Dell (2017), British National Corpus (2025), Corpus of Contemporary American English (2025).

Solutions to the problems of translating phraseological units involve several effective strategies. One approach is adaptive translation, which employs equivalent expressions in the target language that convey the same meaning but are rooted in a different cultural background. This method allows not only the meaning but also the emotional connotation of the original expression to be preserved.

Another method is explanatory translation, in which brief explanations are added to complex phraseological expressions in order to retain the cultural context. This approach is particularly important when a literal translation cannot capture the depth and nuances embedded in the original meaning.

The use of cultural analogues is also common. These help to identify expressions with comparable meanings in the target language's culture, even if they are not literal equivalents. This ensures that the translation remains natural and intelligible to native speakers of the target language, while maintaining a connection with the original cultural context.

Semantic and pragmatic features of phraseological units are closely linked to the ethnolinguistic worldview. Ethnolinguistic phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages not only reflect cultural and historical realities but also contribute to the formation of distinct linguistic worldviews. These expressions fulfil important semantic and pragmatic functions, manifesting in everyday communication, literary texts, and oral traditions.

The semantic features of phraseological units lie in their ability to convey complex cultural concepts through metaphorical and symbolic imagery. For example, the Kyrgyz phraseological unit май талкан (oatmeal with butter) is used

to denote well-being and comfort. Its English equivalent, living in clover, likewise symbolises luxury and abundance. Both expressions demonstrate how natural imagery can be reinterpreted within cultural frameworks to express ideas of wealth and prosperity (Ayto 2020; Osmonova et al. 2015).

The Kyrgyz phraseological unit жүрөгү тоо болуу (heart like a mountain) describes resilience and emotional stability, whereas the English expression heart of stone employs a similar metaphor but carries a negative connotation, signifying indifference and emotional rigidity. This distinction illustrates how identical symbols may acquire different meanings depending on the cultural context (McCarthy and O'Dell 2017; Bashiri 2020).

The pragmatic features of phraseological units are revealed through their functional role in communication. In Kyrgyz culture, significant value is placed on expressions that reflect respect for elders and adherence to tradition. For example, бешик куда болуу (to be a lullaby matchmaker) refers to the traditional practice of arranging marriage contracts during infancy. In contrast, English culture places greater emphasis on individual achievement and personal initiative, as reflected in expressions such as pull oneself up by one's bootstraps (Mieder 2004; Osmonova et al. 2015).

An important pragmatic function also lies in the use of phraseological units to soften speech or enhance its emotional resonance. The Kyrgyz expression суу кечпеген сөз (empty talk, nonsense) is used to describe absurd or unconvincing arguments. In English, the equivalent phrase is doesn't hold water, which conveys an identical meaning (Ayto 2015; McCarthy and O'Dell 2017). These expressions not only encapsulate the core message but also render speech more vivid and expressive (Table 5).

Table 5. Comparative analysis of semantic fields of Kyrgyz and English phraseological units

Subject category	**Kyrgyz phraseological unit**	**Meaning**	**English phraseological unit**	**Meaning**
Well-being and abundance	Май талкан	Prosperity, comfort	Living in clover	Luxurious life
Durability and stability	Жүрөгү тоо болуу	Emotional stability	Heart of stone	Heartlessness, indifference
Family values	Бешик куда болуу	The tradition of early matchmaking	Matchmade in heaven	Ideal marriage
Success and achievements	Баш көтөрүү	Achieve success	Rise to the occasion	Live up to expectations
Incompatibility	Кайнаса каны кошулбайт	Incompatibility of people	Like oil and water	Impossibility of mixing

Subject category	Kyrgyz phraseological unit	Meaning	English phraseological unit	Meaning
Respect and honor	Ата-бабанын батасы	Blessing of the ancestors	Ancestor's blessing	Blessing of the ancestors
Arguments are unconvincing	Суу кечпеген сөз	Empty talk, empty talk	Doesn't hold water	Illogical argument

Source: compiled by the authors based on Mieder (2004), Osmonova et al. (2015), Ayto (2015), McCarthy and O'Dell (2017).

Kyrgyz and English phraseological units often perform similar functions despite differences in cultural realities and historical contexts. This is attributable to the universality of certain concepts – such as family, success, well-being, and respect – which are reflected across different languages and cultures.

The influence of tradition is also pronounced in Kyrgyz expressions, which are often tied to genealogy and family values. For instance, *жети атасын тааныtуу* (to make things hot for somebody) underscores the cultural importance of understanding one's lineage. Such emphases are less prevalent in English, reflecting differences in the perception of family heritage and historical continuity (British National Corpus 2025).

Emotional expression in Kyrgyz phraseological units is highly saturated and is often linked to collective values, where community bonds and respect for traditions hold great importance. In English, expressions tend to emphasise personal achievements and individualism, reflecting the characteristics of Western culture, which is oriented towards personal success and independence (Ilieva 2017; 2018).

Through the course of a comparative analysis of ethnolinguistic phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages, findings were obtained concerning both the structure and semantics of these expressions. These findings highlight the uniqueness of national mentalities and illustrate the extent to which cultural values and traditions are embedded within language.

One notable outcome was the identification of phraseological units with no direct equivalents in the other language. For example, the Kyrgyz phraseological unit арбак колдосун (let the spirits of the ancestors help) reflects ancient beliefs in the protective power of ancestors and spirits – a feature deeply rooted in traditional Kyrgyz culture. There is no equivalent expression in English carrying the same cultural and spiritual weight, although the phrase may the force be with you can serve a similar functional role. However, this expression is primarily associated with popular culture rather than genuine ethnographic or spiritual traditions (Cambridge University Press 1998).

Another finding was the difference in concepts related to nature. Kyrgyz frequently employs phraseological units associated with landscapes, nomadic life, and natural elements. For instance, төбөсү көккө жетүү is used to describe a state of joy and hope. In English, such imagery is not common, and the expression walking on air (to soar in the clouds) is used to convey a similar emotional state (Cambridge University Press 1998).

Another noteworthy feature is the presence of set expressions which, despite differences in lexical form, convey similar underlying concepts. This demonstrates that certain fundamental human experiences are universally reflected in language, although they are expressed through different cultural codes (Table 6).

Table 6. Unique phraseological units of the Kyrgyz and English languages and their cultural contexts

Kyrgyz phraseological unit	Meaning	English equivalent (if available)	Cultural context
Арбак колдосун	Let the spirits of the ancestors help	May the force be with you (условно)	Belief in ancestral spirits, traditional rituals
Төбөсү көккө жетүү	A feeling of joy and hope	Walking on air	Attachment to natural symbols
Майкөл-сүткөл	Wealth and abundance	In abundance	An ethnographic term associated with traditions
Жети атасын таанытуу	Cause trouble, difficulties, or pressure for someone	To make things hot for somebody	Ancestor worship, the importance of clan and family
Суу кечпеген сөз	Empty talk, nonsense	Doesn’t hold water	Structuring logic and argumentation

Source: compiled by the authors based on Cambridge University Press (1998), British National Corpus (2025), Ayto (2020); McCarthy and O’Dell (2017).

Unexpected linguistic patterns emerge in several areas, illustrating both the uniqueness and universality of phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages. One such pattern is the absence of direct equivalents, which stems from the deep-rooted connection of many Kyrgyz phraseological units to traditions, the nomadic lifestyle, and spiritual beliefs. For instance, the concept of **жети атасын таанытуу (to make things hot for somebody)** cannot be conveyed in a single expression in English, as Western cultures generally do not place the same emphasis on ancestral knowledge. This makes such phraseological units difficult to translate without a loss of semantic and cultural depth.

Another important aspect is the universality of emotions. Despite cultural differences, basic feelings such as joy, fear, anger, or surprise are reflected in

both cultures. For example, the Kyrgyz phraseological unit ***жүрөгү түшүү*** and the English have one's heart in one's boots demonstrate a striking similarity in expressing anxiety and emotional shock. This highlights the fact that emotional responses are largely universal and may be articulated through comparable metaphors in different languages.

Cultural lacunae are evident in the absence of certain phraseological units in one language that are widely represented in another. For example, English lacks phraseological expressions related to the nomadic way of life, whereas Kyrgyz contains many such units. The expression at **аттын тизгинде** (literally: "on the horse's bridle"), used to describe the speed of an action, reflects the central role of the horse in nomadic culture. These lacunae underscore how lifestyle and historical experience shape unique linguistic constructs that do not always have direct equivalents in other cultures (Mieder 2004; Ayto 2020).

As a result of the study of ethnolinguistic phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages, both significant differences and common features have been identified, arising from the specificities of national mentalities, historical experiences, and cultural contexts. It has been established that phraseological units in both languages perform important functions: they reflect the worldview, value orientations, social norms, and emotional states of their speakers. The classification of phraseological units into fusions, unities, combinations, and expressions enabled the systematisation of the material and the identification of distinctive features in their semantic structure and pragmatic function. A comparison of Kyrgyz and English phraseological units revealed that, despite differences in cultural traditions and imagery, there exist universal concepts – such as family, well-being, success, and spiritual values – that are reflected in stable linguistic expressions. This analysis highlights the significance of phraseological units as an integral part of the ethnolinguistic worldview and as a vital tool for intercultural communication.

Discussion

The conducted study of ethnolinguistic phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages revealed a number of significant patterns that demonstrate the influence of national mentality on the formation and use of phraseological structures. Analysis of the obtained data showed that, despite substantial cultural differences, there exists a degree of universality in the expression of basic human emotions and social concepts. This supports the hypothesis that language func-

tions not only as a tool of communication but also as a reflection of the mental and cultural processes taking place within society.

One of the key findings of the study was the identification of four principal types of phraseological units in both languages: phraseological fusions, unities, combinations, and expressions. This classification is supported by the research of Kydyrmoldina et al. (2024), who identify similar typological categories in their studies of the Chinese and English languages. At the same time, as observed by Yunus and Hmaidan (2021), Kyrgyz phraseological units exhibit a closer connection with natural metaphors and collectivist values, whereas English expressions more frequently reflect the individualism and pragmatism characteristic of Western culture.

The findings of the study by Lin and Adolphs (2023) further confirm the importance of cultural conditioning in the formation of phraseological units. As the researchers note, cultural context has a direct influence on the semantics of set expressions, shaping not only lexical choices but also the specific metaphorical constructions that reflect the national mentality. In the Kyrgyz language, this is evident in the use of symbols related to nature and the traditional way of life, while in English, imagery associated with achievement and personal success tends to predominate.

Phraseological fusions such as the Kyrgyz алты саны аман and the English safe and sound illustrate how universal concepts of well-being and care are reflected across cultures. Such expressions frequently occur in contexts where wishes for safety and protection are significant, as confirmed by the work of Peromingo (2012), who examines similar phraseological units in European languages. It is noted that their usage in both ritual and everyday contexts suggests the existence of universal patterns of linguistic behaviour deeply rooted in cultural traditions.

Moreover, the study by Andriyenko (2023) highlights the role of emotional colouring in phraseological fusions, emphasising that such expressions not only encapsulate cultural values but also convey emotional nuances specific to each linguaculture. This is particularly evident in expressions of care and support, where cultural distinctions manifest in intonation and contextual usage. For instance, Andriyenko observes that in English-speaking cultures, phraseological units such as safe and sound are typically accompanied by a neutral or reassuring tone, while Kyrgyz equivalents such as алты саны аман often carry a deeper emotional subtext that reflects family and community bonds.

At the same time, phraseological units such as бийик даражадагы адам and big shot demonstrate the impact of sociocultural factors on the meaning of expressions. The study by Ibrahim et al. (2018) underscores that such phraseological

units frequently contain an element of irony, particularly in relation to social status and prestige. Ibrahim et al. note that in English-speaking culture, the expression big shot is often used with a sarcastic tone to highlight an inflated sense of self-importance, whereas the Kyrgyz equivalent атайын киши may retain a more neutral or respectful connotation, depending on the context. This finding is supported by the data obtained, which show that both Kyrgyz and English phraseological units employ metaphorical language to depict social hierarchies, thereby reflecting each society's attitudes towards power and authority.

Phraseological combinations and expressions such as кайнаса каны кошулбайт and like oil and water demonstrate how set phrases can serve as indicators of cultural differences. In Kyrgyz, such expressions often reflect traditional values centred on harmony and collectivism, whereas in English, the emphasis tends to lie on individual differences and personal boundaries (Klubička et al. 2023). The study by Gries (2022) highlights that English idioms related to incompatibility typically focus on personality differences and individual autonomy, while Kyrgyz equivalents interpret incompatibility through the lens of social and familial relationships – an outlook consistent with the collectivist nature of the culture.

The findings of the present study confirm this tendency, illustrating how cultural contexts shape the development and usage of phraseological units in both languages. Further evidence is provided by Łączek (2024), whose research explores the role of cultural scripts in the formation of set expressions. Łączek observes that phraseological units conveying the idea of "incompatibility" differ according to the dominant values of a given society: Eastern cultures are oriented towards social harmony, whereas Western cultures prioritise personal boundaries and independence. This conclusion aligns with the current findings, which show that Kyrgyz expressions emphasise group identity and traditional norms, while English expressions highlight individualism and personal freedom.

Additionally, the study by Rusadze (2024) underscores the role of historical context in the development of phraseological units. Rusadze argues that cultural differences in the perception of incompatibility may be rooted in the distinct historical experiences of societies. For instance, in English-speaking countries – where individualism has long been a prevailing social ideal – set expressions often accentuate personal differences. In contrast, in Kyrgyz culture, which is shaped by nomadic traditions and a strong emphasis on collectivism, phraseological units tend to underscore the importance of social ties and harmonious relationships (Karasayev et al. 2021; Shnanov et al. 2020). The results of this study support these observations, reinforcing the interconnection between language, historical experience, and cultural context.

In addition, the study revealed a number of unexpected linguistic patterns, such as the absence of direct equivalents for certain Kyrgyz phraseological units in English. This observation is supported by the work of Mamasheva et al. (2023), who analysed the complexity of translating Chinese idioms into English and likewise concluded that cultural gaps exist. These findings underscore the importance of considering cultural context when translating and analysing phraseological units. Similar conclusions are presented in the study by Foziliya (2021), who highlights the role of culturally specific concepts in each language and their impact on the adequacy of translation.

Notable results were also reported in the work of Mirzayeva (2021), who investigated the translation of Japanese idioms into English. Mirzayeva emphasises that cultural gaps emerge not only from lexical differences but also from distinct historical and social realities that cannot be fully conveyed in another language. This is consistent with examples of Kyrgyz phraseological units that are challenging to translate into English without compromising their cultural depth.

These findings point to the necessity of adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the study of phraseology – one that integrates both linguistic and cultural perspectives. In this regard, the work of Jashari (Cicko) (2024), who explores cultural gaps in the translation of Scandinavian phraseological units into English, is particularly relevant. Jashari (Cicko) argues that while such gaps complicate the translation process, they also open avenues for cultural dialogue by encouraging the exploration of distinct cultural features through language. The present study supports this view, demonstrating that the analysis of phraseological gaps can enrich our understanding of cultural differences and serve as a valuable tool in promoting intercultural communication.

Equally important is the analysis of emotional expression in phraseological units. The findings of this study confirm the conclusions of Jabeen and Alsmari (2022), who observed that expressions associated with basic emotions such as fear and joy often rely on similar metaphorical imagery across cultures. For example, the Kyrgyz жүрөгү түшүү and the English have one's heart in one's boots reflect universal experiences of anxiety and fear, suggesting the existence of deep cognitive mechanisms common to all people.

Similar conclusions are drawn in the study by Gries (2024), which emphasises that emotional metaphors function as universal cognitive structures, even though their cultural interpretations and linguistic realisations may vary significantly. The work of Khashimova et al. (2023) further explores the influence of cultural factors on emotional expression in idiomatic language. Khashimova notes that although basic emotions are universal, their verbalisation is shaped by cultural norms and

traditions. For instance, some cultures favour direct emotional expression, while others promote restraint.

The results of the current study align with these observations, demonstrating that Kyrgyz phraseological units often reflect collective emotions and social values, whereas English expressions tend to emphasise individual experiences and personal reactions. Also noteworthy is the study by Zhirenov and Ashirov (2024), which analyses the influence of religious and philosophical traditions on the development of emotional metaphors in Romance and Germanic languages. Zhirenov and Ashirov highlight that cultural and religious context can intensify or temper the emotional colouring of idiomatic expressions. This finding is supported by the present data, which show that Kyrgyz phraseological units linked to spiritual and traditional values often convey a deeper emotional subtext than their English counterparts, which are generally more neutral and universal in their emotional tone.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that ethnolinguistic phraseological units in Kyrgyz and English exhibit both universal and culturally specific characteristics. The observed similarities and differences confirm the influence of national mentality on the semantics and pragmatics of phraseological expressions. It was found that the Kyrgyz language predominantly employs imagery related to nature and collectivist values, while English favours expressions rooted in individualism and personal achievement. The analysis also revealed the existence of cultural gaps and challenges in achieving interlingual equivalence, highlighting the importance of accounting for cultural context in the translation and interpretation of phraseological units.

Conclusions

Phraseological units in the Kyrgyz and English languages provide rich material for analysis, reflecting both universal and distinctive features of cultural and linguistic traditions. The comparative analysis revealed that, despite significant differences in historical and socio-cultural contexts, both languages contain phraseological units that express similar concepts – such as concern for well-being, aspiration for success, the expression of emotions, and indicators of social status. This suggests the existence of universal human values that are encoded within linguistic structures.

One of the key findings is the influence of national mentality on the formation and usage of phraseological units. In Kyrgyz, the impact of nomadic culture,

respect for elders, and a close connection with nature is strongly evident, particularly in metaphors involving horses, mountains, and natural phenomena. In contrast, English emphasises individualism, pragmatism, and social mobility, which is reflected in expressions related to personal achievement and economic activity.

The translation of phraseological units between Kyrgyz and English constitutes a complex task, requiring not only linguistic competence but also deep cultural awareness. The principal challenges include the absence of direct equivalents, divergence in cultural realities, and difficulties in conveying emotional nuance. Nevertheless, the application of strategies such as adaptation, explanatory translation, and the identification of cultural analogues enables these challenges to be addressed successfully, while preserving the cultural authenticity of the original expressions.

It is important to recognise that phraseological units are not static; they evolve under the influence of social change, technological advancement, and globalisation. This is evident in the shifting meanings of certain expressions, the emergence of new idioms, and the adaptation of traditional phraseological forms to contemporary realities. The study demonstrated that even well-established expressions can acquire new meanings depending on their usage context and the evolving cultural landscape.

Thus, the phraseological units of the Kyrgyz and English languages serve not only as tools of communication but also as key components of cultural memory and identity. Their analysis provides valuable insight into the formation of national linguistic worldviews and contributes to the advancement of intercultural communication – an increasingly important objective in the context of globalisation and cultural exchange.

This study, however, has a number of limitations that should be acknowledged in interpreting its findings. Firstly, the analysis was restricted to a selected set of examples, which may not fully represent the breadth of the phraseological inventories of Kyrgyz and English. Secondly, the focus was placed primarily on traditional and widely used expressions, with modern neologisms and youth slang falling outside the scope of analysis.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the dataset by incorporating a broader range of contemporary texts, media content, and colloquial speech. Furthermore, a more in-depth examination of the pragmatic use of phraseological units in diverse socio-cultural settings is advisable. A promising direction for further study may also be the investigation of the effects of bilingualism and language contact on the transformation of phraseological units in the context of globalisation.

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