

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reinterpretation And Stylistic Activation Of Expressions In The Digital Environment

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Abstract

The study substantiates the reinterpretation of expressions in the internet context, namely their metaphorization, semantic extension and narrowing, pragmatic shift, code-mixing (English-Uzbek hybrid forms), as well as the formation of new layers of meaning under the influence of slang and language play. It also demonstrates that multimodal contexts (memes, GIFs, emojis) and contextual intertextuality (references to films, songs, and popular content) expand the semantic scope of expressions and enhance their pragmatic impact in discourse. As illustrative examples, internet-specific expressions such as "tarmoqni portlatdi" (went viral), "like bosmoq" (to like), "kommentlarda o't oldi" (sparked heated debate in the comments), "postda portlamoq" (to blow up in a post), "trollarga yem bo'lmoq" (to become food for trolls), and "trendga chiqmoq" (to trend) are analyzed, with attention to their denotative and connotative meanings and communicative functions. As a result, the digital environment is concluded to be a significant factor that expands the stylistic potential of expressions and shapes new phraseological units and semantic-pragmatic tendencies in contemporary Uzbek.

KEY WORDS

Digital environment, internet text, expression, stylistic features, metaphorization, code-mixing, multimodality, internet expressions.

INTRODUCTION

The widespread use of linguistic processes on the internet makes a substantial contribution to the development of the modern Uzbek language. In this regard, the internet, as one of the broadest platforms of contemporary communication, forms a language system of its own. Internet texts are characterized by stylistic freedom, simplicity, diversity of expressive means, humor, and emotionality. In this environment, fixed expressions (phraseological units, proverbs, figurative expressions) emerge as one of the most effective stylistic devices with strong expressive power. In internet discourse, they serve functions such as increasing

emotionality (e.g., "tili qattiq" sharp-tongued, "ko'z ochib yunguncha" in the blink of an eye), introducing irony, sarcasm, and evaluation into meaning (e.g., "qo'l qovushtirib turmoq" to stand idly by, "pishiq-puxta odam" a well-rounded person), creating expressiveness and imagery (e.g., "yuragi o'z bag'riga sig'maydi" his heart cannot contain itself, "bo'ridan qo'rqib bo'rini suvga cho'ktirmoq" to drown the wolf out of fear of the wolf), and ensuring a balance between colloquial and folk styles.

In the process of fulfilling these functions, the position of fixed units within the textual environment and their roles in different

types of discourse become evident—particularly the re-categorization of such units into various forms within the speech system. This is обусловлено, first, by the tendency of internet language toward brevity and conciseness, whereby fixed expressions become short yet semantically rich means of expression. Second, visual and multimodal contexts contribute to meaning expansion, as fixed expressions are often used alongside GIFs, memes, and emojis. Third, youth slang and language play encourage internet users—especially young people—to engage phraseological units in new semantic games, assigning them novel figurative or even “reversed” meanings. Fourth, contextual intertextuality plays a role: when fixed expressions reference popular films, songs, or content, their meanings are interpreted through the source of that reference. Taking these changes into account, this study undertakes an analysis of fixed expressions in the digital environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is well known that over the past fifty years the semantics, structure, and functional characteristics of phraseological units have been studied in depth. The field of phraseology, like other branches of linguistics, has been systematically explored, resulting in the compilation of scientifically grounded classificatory dictionaries of phraseological units. Within this field, various theoretical schools and approaches have emerged, which has significantly broadened the scope of perspectives on phraseological units.

For example, the Russian linguist V.V. Vinogradov defines phraseological units as “combinations of language elements that function as communicative units with an inherent, integral semantic property”[1,88-154] defines them accordingly. This approach proposes examining phraseological units on the basis of their communicative function and semantic integrity.

In Uzbek linguistics as well, a number of theoretical perspectives on phraseology have been developed. A. E. Mamatov approaches this issue consistently and does not consider it appropriate to distinguish phraseological units in a “broad” or “narrow” sense. According to him, regardless of what type of language units phraseological expressions may be—aphorisms, proverbs, sayings, fixed conversational formulas, or so-called “winged expressions”—if they possess the features characteristic of phraseological units, they should be evaluated within the framework of a unified phraseological system. He arrives at the following conclusion: if an expression

is structurally equivalent to a word combination or a sentence, exhibits imagery and generalized meaning, employs its lexical elements partially or fully in a figurative sense, and is recorded in dictionaries, such units must be included in the corpus of phraseological units[2,212].

The Kazakh linguist S. K. Kenesbayev classified phraseological units into two main categories—proverbs and sayings, and idioms—and conducted an in-depth analysis of their semantic and structural characteristics[3,161]. According to the scholar, phraseological units are not homogeneous in their internal structure; however, they share a unifying core feature. He refers to this feature as “reproducibility” (воспроизводимость) and identifies it as a universal characteristic of phraseological units.

Sh. Rahmatullayev defines phraseological units as follows: “A phrase (phraseological unit) is a lexical unit consisting of more than one lexical base, structurally equivalent to a word combination or a sentence, semantically equivalent to a word, and expressing an integral figurative (metaphorical) meaning as a whole. By using the term “lexical unit”, we distinguish a phrase from a free combination; by emphasizing “more than one”, we distinguish it from a simple word; by “lexical bases”, we differentiate it from an analytic form; by “equivalent to a word combination or a sentence”, we separate it from a compound word; by “integral figurative meaning”, we distinguish it from a fixed combination with a literal meaning; and by “equivalent to a word” we indicate that it possesses a number of additional properties inherent to lexical units” [4,56].

Today, internet communication has become the primary arena of interaction in modern society, and the language units used within it—particularly phraseological units—are undergoing new semantic processes. Phraseological expressions that have stable meanings in traditional discourse are observed to acquire new layers of meaning in the online environment as a result of contextual reinterpretation, metaphorical expansion, and even ironic inversion.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

It is well known that the language of the internet, in addition to common vocabulary, is enriched with numerous neologisms, jargon items, and English borrowings and hybrids. Examples include like, repost, content, ban, admin, fake, trend, post, stories, as well as expressions such as “open content,” “uploaded a story,” and “worked as advertising.”

These units function within specific socio-cultural contexts and operate as lexico-semantic units.

When used in expressions, such words—unlike those of general folk phraseology—acquire new semantic loads in the internet context and are being reshaped as a contemporary linguistic phenomenon. Examples include “tarmoqni portlatdi” (blew up the network / went viral), “like bosildi” (a like was given), and “kommentlarda o’t oldi” (sparked heated debate in the comments).

To blow up the network (tarmoqni portlatmoq):

tarmoq (network)

a part that branches off from a main road, flow, etc.; a branch; a branch of a main organization or association; a field or sector related to science, technology, agriculture, and the like.

To spread a network (tarmoq yoymoq): to branch out into networks; to form branches. [5,737]. In this example, the original lexical meaning of the word refers to the internet network and social networks (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, etc.). However, in internet slang it acquires an extended metaphorical meaning that denotes the entire online space.

To explode / to blow up (portlatmoq) refers to the bursting of an object as a result of a powerful reaction or ignition of gases, causing it to expand rapidly and break into fragments or scatter into pieces (used with reference to an object or phenomenon)[5,319]. However, in the internet context and youth slang, the expression undergoes metaphorical transformation and is used in the sense of “caused a major buzz” or “attracted a great deal of attention.”

The phrase “tarmoqni portlatdi” (blew up the network) does not convey the literal meaning of “causing an explosion in the internet network” in a text; rather, it generates several figurative and socially conditioned meanings:

Expressing viral content.

It denotes the rapid and wide popularity of a video, photo, post, or piece of news – its dissemination accompanied by major public excitement. Although the verb portamoq (to explode) originally refers to a physical phenomenon, here it is used metaphorically to mean became the focus of attention or everyone started talking about it.

For example: “The new “Ko’k Jiguli” music video blew up the network!” (i.e., it received millions of views and became a trend).

Indicating social resonance.

The expression is used with reference to events that provoke discussion, debate, or intense exchange of opinions.

For example: “The politician’s interview blew up the network.”

Emotional – positive coloring.

It is often employed with a tone of praise or admiration.

For example: “This meme really blew up the network!”

In some cases, this phraseological unit may also carry negative connotations, as in: “This rumor blew up the network.”

The expression “tarmoqni portlatdi” in internet texts exemplifies the processes of metaphorization, semantic expansion, and pragmatic shift within phraseology. Metaphorization occurs when the process of “explosion” becomes a metaphor for an “information explosion” in social networks. Semantic expansion is observed in that an expression initially used for major events (films, concerts, political speeches) gradually extends to ordinary jokes, memes, or personal posts, coming to denote new objects, events, or phenomena. Pragmatic change manifests in the fact that the expression conveys the speaker’s emotional evaluation – not merely a factual statement, but a subjective judgment implying “it attracted a lot of attention” or “it became a trend.”

“Like bosmoq” (to press like): like is a word borrowed from English, originally meaning to like or to approve. It entered the Uzbek language through social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, etc.). In online platforms, pressing the  Like icon denotes approving or liking the content of a post, image, or video. Thus, its denotative core meaning is “to press the like button.”

To press (bosmoq):

1. to push or press with force;
2. to press forcefully so as to leave a mark or imprint;
3. to squeeze or push by applying pressure;
4. to strike forcefully in order to shape or produce something;

5. (physics) to exert pressure or compress by one's own weight or elastic force [6, 383].

In the expression, bosmoq conveys the meanings "to touch by applying pressure" and "to press a button/key with a finger." As a result of code-mixing between an English lexeme (like) and an Uzbek verb (bosmoq), the elements combine to form a new semantic unit.

In this expression, the user conveys their attitude implicitly, as a virtual marker of social interaction that carries connotative meaning. By pressing like as a sign of support, a friendly or approving stance is expressed. In some cases, the phrase "he/she only pressed like" (i.e., showed a superficial reaction without leaving a comment) conveys meanings of formality or artificiality. In discourse, the original physical meaning of the verb bosmoq (to press, as in pressing a button) becomes abstract and semantically expands to mean performing a virtual action. Moreover, there is a metonymic relationship between the act of pressing the like icon and the feeling of liking or approval. The English word like is used in Uzbek without phonetic change, but when combined with an Uzbek verb it adapts to Uzbek syntactic patterns (like qilmoq, like bosmoq).

Synonyms: layk bosmoq, layk qilmoq (with Russian-based spelling), press the like button.

Antonym: dislike bosmoq (used less frequently, but a clear semantic opposition exists).

Thus, the expression "like bosmoq" (to press like) is a new lexico-semantic unit formed within internet communication, fulfilling pragmatic functions such as expressing approval or liking (positive evaluation), maintaining contact with the interlocutor, and showing attention to the post's author. Denotatively, it refers to the action of pressing the like button; connotatively, it conveys social-semantic meanings such as approval, attention, and support. At the same time, this expression represents a vivid example illustrating processes of linguistic adaptation, semantic expansion, and code-mixing.

"Kommentlarda o't oldi" (caught fire in the comments): comment is a borrowed form of the English word comment, meaning to leave an opinion or remark, and refers to responses under a post or article on the internet. The suffix -larda combines plurality and case marking ("in the comments"). O't oldi (caught fire) is a two-component verbal construction originally meaning to ignite or to catch fire; it is the past tense form of the verb olmoq (to take – to obtain or

seize something by hand or with a tool). [5,123]) when combined, it conveys the meaning "caught fire, flames emerged." In the example, "o't oldi" (caught fire) is used figuratively. In the text, its denotative meaning refers to "the ignition process began, flames appeared" (e.g., "the ember caught fire"), while its connotative meaning denotes "a debate intensified," "the comments section became heated," or "active discussion began." The expression "kommentlarda o't oldi" metaphorically represents the sharpness and intensity of comments through the image of fire.

The process of "catching fire" (burning) is metaphorically transferred to the meaning "the debate flared up." Compared to neutral expressions such as "a debate began" or "the discussion intensified," this phrase has a stronger, more dramatic impact and heightens emotional-expressive force. With frequent use in texts, the expression is becoming stabilized and is undergoing jargonization / internet phraseologization. It fulfills pragmatic functions such as emphasizing the intensity or escalation of debate and creating spectacle and excitement (e.g., "The comments caught fire – everyone is arguing!").

Synonyms: "the debate gained momentum," "the comments exploded," "the discussion intensified."

Antonymic forms: "the comments are calm," "the discussion stopped."

Thus, "kommentlarda o't oldi" is a widely used metaphorical phraseological unit in internet discourse which, denotatively, refers to the process of ignition, and connotatively, denotes the heating up, escalation, and buzzworthy onset of debate in social media comments. This expression is a vivid illustration of the metaphorical nature of internet language, transferring a simple physical phenomenon (ignition) to the expression of social reality.

"Postda portlamоq" (to blow up in a post): post is a borrowing from English, used to mean "a message, article, image, video, etc. published on a social network." The suffix -da marks the locative case (where? → "in the post"). Portlamоq (to explode) is an Uzbek verb whose denotative meaning is "to burst and break into fragments as a result of the rapid expansion caused by a powerful reaction or ignition of gases (with reference to an object or phenomenon)" [5,319]". In this construction, the English borrowing post and the Uzbek verb portlamоq (to explode) combine to form a new internet-specific semantic unit.

The denotative meaning of "to explode, burst, rise with a bang" (e.g., "the grenade exploded") is metaphorically extended, first, to denote the emergence of sharp reactions under a post (the accumulation of comments, the intensification of debate), and second, to indicate that a post becomes extremely popular (receiving many likes and comments, going viral). Thus, "postda portlamoq" conveys the metaphorical meaning "the post generated strong resonance." Here, the physical phenomenon of explosion is transferred from the physical domain to the socio-cultural domain (the post exploded → the post became extremely popular / provoked heated debate).

Compared to the neutral expression "the number of comments increased," this phrase produces a more dramatic and emotionally expressive effect. It fulfills pragmatic functions such as signaling that a post has entered the trend sphere ("This post blew up last night") or emphasizing the escalation of debate under a post ("A conflict exploded in the comments"). Through widespread use in social media discourse, the expression is gradually becoming a stable phraseological unit.

Synonyms: "the post went viral," "the post became a trend," "the post spread widely."

Antonymic expressions: "the post was ignored," "the post received little attention."

Thus, "postda portlamoq" is a vivid example of metaphorization in internet language: denotatively referring to an explosion, and connotatively denoting intense debate or strong resonance on social networks. This hybrid English-Uzbek construction functions in discourse as a new, expressive lexico-semantic unit.

"Trollarga yem bo'lmoq" (to become food for trolls): troll is the plural form of the English word troll (a user who deliberately provokes or irritates others). The suffix -ga marks the dative case (to whom? to what?). Yem literally means "animal feed" (grain, hay, fodder). Bo'lmoq is a verb meaning "to become, to occur."

"Trollarga yem bo'lmoq" is a hybrid expression composed of an English element (troll) and an Uzbek phrase (yem bo'lmoq). Denotatively, "yem bo'lmoq" means "to become food for animals" (e.g., "it became food for rabbits"). Connotatively, it means "to fall into provocation," "to become a victim of trolling," or "to be unable to defend oneself in a debate and turn into an object of trolls' attacks." In this metaphor, "food"

represents the material that trolls feed on – provocative reactions and emotional responses. The image shifts from animal feed to a person becoming material for trolls' mockery or provocation.

Compared to the neutral expression "became a victim of trolls," the phrase "trollarga yem bo'ldi" is stronger, more ironic, and carries heightened emotional-expressive coloring. It is often used pragmatically to warn users not to respond to provocation ("Don't become food for trolls!") or to describe, with irony, a situation in which someone fails to resist trolling.

Synonyms: "to fall into trolls' trap," "to be provoked," "to become a victim of trolling."

Antonymic expressions: "to ignore trolls," "not to respond to trolls."

Thus, "trollarga yem bo'lmoq" is a widely used metaphor-based phraseological unit in internet discourse. Denotatively, yem refers to animal feed; connotatively, it denotes becoming material for trolls' arguments or ridicule. The expression, derived from the notion of trolls as provocative users, conveys that someone has been subjected to sarcasm, criticism, or offensive comments on social media. The component "yem bo'ldi" introduces a negative semantic coloring through a hunting/victim metaphor.

"Trendga chiqmoq" (to enter the trend): trend is borrowed from English trend (direction, tendency). The suffix -ga marks the dative case (where to? → "to the trend list / category of popularity"). Chiqmoq is an Uzbek verb whose dictionary meaning is "to rise upward, to move to a higher level, or to climb onto something" [7,529].

"Trendga chiqmoq" (to enter the trend) is a hybrid expression composed of English and Uzbek elements and, in its literal sense, denotes "to enter the list of trends." In the internet context, it is used with connotative meanings such as "to gain popularity," "to attract public attention," and "to appear in the trending section of social media." Although the English word trend originally meant "general direction" or "tendency," in internet discourse it has undergone semantic narrowing and is now used almost exclusively in the sense of "popularity on social media." At the same time, the Uzbek verb chiqmoq (to go up, to rise) has experienced metaphorical extension, shifting from the meaning "to move to a higher place" to "to reach a high position, to become widely popular."

In the example "The post entered the trend" (Post trendga

chiqdi!), the expression conveys approval and success, while "The video needs to enter the trend" (Video trendga chiqishi kerak) reflects a competitive or aspirational meaning, thus fulfilling a pragmatic function.

Synonyms: to become popular, to become a trend, to go viral.

Antonymic expressions: to fall out of the trend, to remain unnoticed.

Thus, "trendga chiqmoq" is a new lexico-semantic unit formed in internet discourse. Denotatively, it refers to entering the trending category; connotatively, it means becoming popular or spreading widely among the public. This expression is an English-Uzbek hybrid shaped through processes of semantic narrowing and metaphorical expansion, and it has become a stable, frequently used unit in social media language.

The internet phraseological units discussed above differ from classical phraseological units in that they are figurative, context-dependent, and characterized by strong emotional-semantic loading. Such expressions serve as important tools for conveying emotional evaluation, humor, criticism, irony, or positive attitudes, as well as for expressing social judgment, reaction, dynamism, and affective coloring. They introduce stylistic diversity into communication, spread rapidly among social media users, and gradually turn into speech stereotypes. In this way, internet language has developed its own phraseological system, which serves as a significant source for analyzing the semantic dynamics of digital texts.

The study of semantic changes in phraseological units used in internet texts provides linguistics with new data reflecting the contemporary stage of language development. This phenomenon also contributes to understanding intercultural communication, since transformed expressions often enter languages through global internet culture. The analysis of semantic shifts in online discourse is important for linguocultural research as well, as it reflects social and emotional attitudes, humor, and irony prevalent in society. Moreover, the reinterpretation of phraseological units necessitates new approaches in education, translation, and language teaching methodology. In this way, internet phraseologisms are becoming an integral component of the modern semantic system.

For people of the twenty-first century, the internet has become an information space that facilitates the expression of professional, business, creative, and personal ideas and views.

From the early years of our country's independence,

consistent reforms have been implemented across all spheres of society, with particular attention given to the rapid development of science. As in other fields, Uzbek linguistics has also witnessed the emergence of new directions at the intersection with other disciplines. At the turn of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, advances in modern information technologies and the emergence of new communicative domains have stimulated the study of internet texts. The internet, as a communicative transmission channel that emerged in the late 1960s, not only led to the formation of a global information environment but also gave rise to a distinct virtual world, network communities and blogs, as well as new forms of network culture and language. Its scale, diversity, and unpredictability have made it an object of research for many scholars and have also influenced the field of paremiology: the use of proverbs in internet genres has become an important source of investigation for linguists.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that due to the rapid development at the end of the twentieth century, processes of creative use of all linguistic units—including proverbs—have become particularly active, with mass media, especially the internet, playing a significant role. Thus, through internet-based communication channels, it has become possible to disseminate texts carrying new cognitive content to virtually any corner of the globe within seconds, thereby enabling the expression of new (non-standard) approaches, ideas, and viewpoints.

From a linguistic perspective, the internet stimulates creativity and imagination, fosters users' creative abilities, and clearly demonstrates the use of proverbs through visual means. Moreover, as a result of the active and creative engagement of internet users today, the paremiological lexicon of the modern Uzbek language is being enriched with visual proverbs as well. In this process, speakers often draw on original structural-semantic models, which effectively attract learners' attention. Our analysis shows that the internet has become an environment that offers users broad opportunities for self-expression, a fact confirmed by the processes of modification affecting paremic units in online discourse. These processes, in turn, reveal the interconnection between freedom and creativity in internet communication.

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