

COMPARISON BETWEEN ENGLISH AND TURKISH
COLOUR IDIOMS

СРАВНЕНИЕ ИДИОМ КАСАТЕЛЬНО ЦВЕТОВ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ
И ТУРЕЦКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ

Аннотациясы: Идиомалар – бул баардык тилдердин эң маанилүү жана кызыктуу бөлүмү. Биз күнүмдүк жашообузда билип, билбестен идиомалар менен байланышта болобуз. Дүйнөдө ар кайсы маданиятка таандык көптөгөн идиомалар бар. Башка маданияттар менен жакшы мамиле куруу үчүн башка тилге жана културага таандык идиомалардын үстүндө иштөө жана аларды салыштыруу абдан маанилүү. Бул макалада англисче жана түркчө идиомалардагы өң-түстөр жана булардын салыштырылмасы берилди.

Негизги сөздөр: Өң-түс, англисче, түркчө, идиома, салыштыруу, окшоштуктар, айырмачылыктар, маданият, култура, тил, фигура.

Аннотация: Идиомы являются неотъемлемой частью языка. В быту осознанно или нет, мы очень часто с ними сталкиваемся. В мире существует очень множество идиом разных культур. Исследование идиом различных культур и языков, а так же произведение сравнения между ними является крайне важной работой в построении прочного моста между цивилизациями. Данная работа направлена на изучение и сравнение идиом, касающихся цветов в английском и турецком языках.

Ключевые слова: Цвет, Английский, Турецкий, Идиома, Сходства, Различия, Култура, Язык.

Abstract: Idioms are very sweet part of every language. Consciously or unconsciously we get in touch with idioms in our daily life. No doubt, there are numberless idioms belong to different cultures in the world. Therefore, to build a strong bridge between the civilisations, it is a very important task to deal with the idioms of different cultures and languages and compare them. This article is as a comparative study which focuses on the comparison between the selected English and Turkish colour idioms.

Keywords: Colour, English, Turkish, idioms, comparison, similarities, differences, culture, language, images.

INTRODUCTION

Idioms have long been considered as a very special part of every languages. When people speak each other express their feelings by using a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning. Idioms are the back-bone and the flesh of every language. How a garden cannot be imagined as a beautiful place without roses and different kinds of flowers similarly, no one can get the taste and sweetness of a language without idioms. It can be said that

idioms encompass our life from all its aspects. The different situation of our daily life can be better communicated and described by the help of the idioms. It means that consciously or unconsciously, we often use the idioms in the different steps of social life.

Idioms are just like a cultural bridge between the past and now and always carry the old traditions to present day with beautiful, attractive short and effective expression. In addition, idioms are treasure for moral and traditional values. Therefore it can be said that idioms give people ethical and

traditional advises by reminding the past events. For instance; “*don't carry coal to new castle*” is an English idiom which advises not to do some works which are unbeneficial, or done before. The following idiom “*As cunning as a fox*” describes a very clever personality. Also “*Pull the wool over someone's eye*” warns us about the tricky people who easily deceive everybody. Some idioms try to give ethical lessons to people. For instance; “*don't look a gift horse in the mouth*, “*don't pour cold water in cooked meal*” is a Turkish idiom that advises not to spoil anybody's plan, work or business which was already completed. , “*don't pour oil on the flame*”, is an English idiom which advises not to intensify or escalate the tension in between the two side.

No doubt, there are many different definitions of idioms. The following definitions will enhance our knowledge about idioms;

“Idioms are indispensable to the daily speech of people and to the language of the books and newspapers, television and movies.”¹

“Idiom is a group of words. As a group, the words combine to form a new meaning. The words work as a team. For example, You know the meaning of house and cards and you probably know the literal meaning of house of cards. The idiomatic meaning of is –an organization or a plan that is very weak and can easily be destroyed.”²

“Idiom: The mode of language used by a particular people or by an individual.”³

“Idiom: an expression characteristic of a particular language not logically or grammatically explicable”⁴

“Idiom is a distinctive expression whose meaning is not determinable from the meaning of the individual words.”⁵

“Idiom is a traditional way of saying something.”⁶

Several definitions of idioms show that, the idioms which appear in any culture are not only simply group of words or kinds of combined metaphorical structures but they are also colourful part of tradition which take place in every walks of social, cultural, financial, political, ethical and even religious life

It has been observed that those who have limited knowledge of idioms may mistakenly understand the figurative meanings as literal. For example; the idiom ‘*to let the cat out of the bag*’ is a metaphorical expression; it means to reveal the secrets of someone. However, even the English speaking people think that it really means to let the cat out of the bag. Or Turkish speaking people understand the idiom in a literal sense and suppose that really someone is letting a cat out of the bag. *Kuyusunu kazmak* (sink/dig somebody's well) is a Turkish idiom which metaphorically means “preparing some plots secretly for someone” If it is understood literally, meaning will be totally different.

Comparison of the idioms of different languages is a remarkable work. However, unique language characteristics, historical, cultural and religious backgrounds of nations cause some differences especially in syntactical forms, meanings and images of idioms. On the other hand pure reason, common sense, nature, needs and expectations of human being independently gave a birth to some similarities between the idioms of different cultures.

This article can be accepted as a comparative study which focuses on the comparison between some selected English and Turkish colour idioms. In order to indicate the similarities and differences, first of all, English idiom was given on the top after that either Turkish idiom or its translation into English was written. Then both idioms were analysed and made detailed expressions about the similarities and differences in meanings, images and colours. Finally, usage of English and Turkish idioms demonstrated with examples.

¹ Gaines Barbara K. ,Idiomatic American English: A Step-by-step Workbook for Learning Everyday American Expressions, Kodansha International press, 1986, Page, VII.

² Leaney Cindy, Dictionary of American Idioms, Cambridge University Press, 2006, Page, vi.

³ Cunningham W. T., The Nelson Contemporary English Dictionary, Nelson Thornes Publications, 1977, Page, 258

⁴ Davidson G., Concise English Dictionary, Wordsworth Editions, 2007, Page, 447.

⁵ Chambers Allied. The Chambers Dictionary, Allied Publishers, 1998, Page, 797.

⁶ Hirsch Eric Donald, Trefil Joseph F. Kett, James S. , The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Printing, 2002, Page, 154.

GREEN IN IDIOMS

* Give Green light

YYeşil ışık yakmak – Turn on green light

Meaning of idioms: to give permission

English and Turkish idioms have the same meaning and same images. *Give green light* means in English idiom to give permission someone to go ahead. *Yeşil ışık yakmak* means in Turkish idiom give permission. It can be said that both idioms focus on the act of giving permission to someone to go further or do something. Actually, in many cultures green is generally the colour of positive actions therefore both idioms use the green as a metaphor that symbolise agreement or permission.

English example:

1 – The chief gave us the green light. ⁷

2 – The council has given the green light to new shopping development. ⁸

Turkish example:

Milli Güvenlik Kurulu toplandı ve Irak'a karşı Türkiye üzerinden Kuzey Cephesi açılmasına *yeşil ışık yaktı*. ⁹

* Have green fingers

Meaning: ability to grow plants

On parmağında on hüner olmak – Ten Talents on one's ten fingers таланттуу

Meaning: to have ability to do many works

English and Turkish idioms have the same meaning but different images. English idiom expresses the ability to grow plants or do good gardening with the image of green fingers. Actually, *green fingers* demonstrate the somebody's talent. However Turkish idiom never gets in touch with the green colour or growing some plants but only shows the abilities of a person with the image of *ten talents on one's ten fingers*. It can be said that images of both idioms extremely different. on the one hand, English idiom uses the green colour

with fingers to show the abilities of a person in a specific field. On the other hand, Turkish idiom generally shows somebody's abilities in any field without using green colour.

English example:

Just look at Mr. Simpson's garden. He has green fingers. ¹⁰

Turkish example:

Bileğinden kınalı ellerinin *on parmağında on ayrı hüner*; aş pişirmesi, nakışı. dikişi.. konuk ağırlaması sanasın bir toy! Kimselere benzemez. ¹¹

BLUE IN IDIOMS

* Out of the blue

Meaning: to happen something suddenly and unexpectedly

Damdan düşer gibi – As falling from the roof – suddenly and unexpectedly

Meaning: happen – occur something unexpectedly or suddenly

English and Turkish idioms have the same meaning and different images. *out of the blue* means in English to happen something suddenly and unexpectedly. *Damdan düşer gibi* also means in Turkish unexpectedly or suddenly. According to Turkish culture falling from the roof is very unexpected and undesired accident. That is why it is very common to say in Turkish “damdan düşer gibi konuşma: do not say anything like falling from the roof” means;do not speak suddenly without realizing the result that perhaps will hurt somebody as falling person from the roof. English and Turkish idioms try to explain the unexpected situation by using the different images. The difference is between the two idioms is English idiom used *blue colour*. However Turkish idiom used no any colour.

English example:

Then one day completely out of the blue, I had a letter from her. ¹²

⁷ Christine Ammer, The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms, Christine Ammer, 1992, Boston, Page, 191.

⁸ Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2008, Page, 630.

⁹ Şimşir, Bilâl N.,Türk-İrak ilişkilerinde Türkmenler, Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara,2004, Page, 590.

¹⁰ Spears Richard A. , Kirkpatrick Betty , Kirkpatrick E. M. ,NTC's Super-Mini English Idioms Dictionary, Mc Graw Hill Professional, 2000,Page,72..

¹¹ Işinsu Emine , Ak topraklar, Töre-Devlet Yayınevi, Ankara, 1978, Page, 124.

¹² Leaney Cindy,In the Know, Understanding And Using the Idioms, Cambridge University Press, Newyork, 2005, Page, 181

Turkish example:

Birden bire, yersizce, patavatsızca. “*Damdan düşer gibi* konuşmasında, bacağına bacağının üstüne atmasında hemen kimsede görmediğim çirkin bir cüret, terbiyesizlik vardı.”¹³

*** Once in a blue moon**

Meaning: to happen something not very often but rarely

Kırk yılda bir – Once within forty years

Meaning: rarely no often

English and Turkish idioms have the same meaning and different images. *once in a blue moon* means in English to happen something not very often but rarely. *Kırk yılda bir* also means in Turkish not very often. Both idiom beautifully indicate rare occasions by using the different images. For instance; English idiom used *Blue colour* with moon to demonstrate rare occasions. Nevertheless Turkish idiom expressed the same condition by using numeral period *forty years*. Blue moon and forty years interestingly symbolizes very rare happenings. Because Moon normally doesn't seem blue or only seen immediately after after a volcanic eruption, like that of Krakatao in 1883. Forty is a very important number to expresses the long term or impossibilities of something in Turkish culture.

English example:

Dad pitches the ball over and over, but Kerry hits the ball once in a blue moon.¹⁴

Turkish example:

Kırk yılda bir ablamın sözünü tutmuş.¹⁵

RED IN IDIOMS

*** Red faced**

Meaning: embarrassed person

Yüzü kızarmak – get one's face red

Meaning: ashamed person

English and Turkish idioms have the same meaning and nearly same images. *red faced* in

English idiom depicts the embarrassed person. *Yüzü kızarmak* in Turkish also reflects the same meaning. It can be said that both idioms focus on embarrassed person's appearance by using the red colour. Actually, red faced symbolizes ashamed person. In English, Turkish and Kyrgyz literature. Perhaps both idioms have a very slight syntactical dissimilarity which never makes any difference in meaning and images.

English example:

Charlane walked into the class a little late. Suddenly the whole group began to giggle. Charlene looked down and saw that she was wearing her jacket inside out. “Well, I was in hurry!” She said, red-faced.¹⁶

Turkish example:

Zaten ona şimdiye kadar şık olmaktan başka bir şey mi öğretmişler? Avrupa'da iken karısının şapkaları, ropları, tuvaletleri, çantaları, eldivenleriyle nasıl ciddiyetle uğraştığı aklına gelince, *yüzü kızardı*.¹⁷

*** Red as a beetroot:**

Meaning: state of embarrassed person

Pancar gibi kızarmak – get red as a beetroot

Meaning: state of ashamed person

English and Turkish idioms have the same meaning and same images. Both idioms figuratively depicts the embarrassed person by using the same colour and same metaphors-beetroot. No doubt due to the different language structures there is a little syntactical dissimilarity between English and Turkish idioms that never affects on meaning and images.

English example:

She went as red as a beet root when I questioned about her fiancée.¹⁸

Turkish example:

1 – Cemile ne diyeceğini bilemediği için yüzü pancar gibi kızardı.¹⁹

¹³ Yetiş Kâzım, Ayverdi Sâmiha Türkçenin nakışları: atasözleri, deyimler, tekerlemeler, Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, İstanbul, 1993, Page,51.

¹⁴ Rasinski Timothy, Idioms and other English Expressions, Published by Corinno Burton, Huntington, 2008, Page, 20.

¹⁵ Tahir Kemal, Esir şehrin mahpusu, İlhaki Yayınları, İstanbul, 2007, Page, 208.

¹⁶ Rasinski Timothy, Idioms and other English Expressions, Published by Corinno Burton, Huntington, 2008, Page, 21.

¹⁷ Tahir Kemal, Esir şehrin insanları, İlhaki yayınları, İstanbul, 2007. Page, 406

¹⁸ Kumar Vijaya, Sterling Dictionary of Idioms, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, India, Page, 382.

¹⁹ Aitmatov Chingiz, İlk Öğretmenim, 1974, Page, 163.

2 – Kusura bakma... bizimki burada mı?... Feyzâ gözüyle köşeyi işaret etti. Cavidan'ın yüzü pancar gibi kırmızı, saç başı dağınıktı...²⁰

BLACK IN IDIOMS

* Black market

Meaning: illegal business

Kara borsa – *black (stock) market*

Meaning: illegal trade-business

Deceiving and Illegal trade accepted as a dishonest behaviour in every culture. Black market means illegal business. In that case both idioms figuratively explain all kinds of illegal trades by using same images. the black colour is used with market as a symbol of illegal activities in business or money.

English example:

You can sell dollars in black market.²¹

Turkish example:

Gıda stokları da erimiş olduğundan yiyecek ve içecek her şey *kara borsaya düştü*.²²

* Black list

Meaning: list of illegal or corrupted people

Kara list – *Kara liste*

Meaning: list of illegal or corrupted people

Black list means list of illegal or corrupted people. Both idioms figuratively indicate the illegal or corrupted people in a special list by using same images. Black is used as a negative colour with the list, symbolizes illegal and harmful people.

English example:

The industry blacklisted him for exposing its corruption.²³

Turkish example:

İşverenler Kara listede yer alan işçileri kendi işyerlerinde çalıştırmayarak işçiler üzerinde baskı

uygulamaktadır.²⁴

* White as the driven snow

Meaning: pure, clean and deep white

Kar gibi beyaz – *White like snow*

Meaning: pure, clean and deep white

White is a colour of purity in many traditions which symbolizes the blamelessness. Above given English and Turkish idioms have the same meaning and same images. Both idioms express the extremely white or deep white like snow.

English example:

But then, from the umbrages of the forest, in the wake of the running wolves, came two horses, one *as white as driven snow*, and the other black as a raven's wing.²⁵

Turkish example:

Ferace kuşanmış *kar gibi beyaz* yaşmak tutunmuşum. Gözlerim sürmeli, parmaklarım kınalı idi.²⁶

* White as a ghost

Meaning: to have a very pale complexion

Yüzü kireç kesilmek – *Turning one's face whitish (like hydrated lime)*

Meaning: having whitish complexion

English and Turkish idioms have the same meaning and different images. *white as a ghost* means in English to have a very pale complexion from fright or illness. *yüzü kireç kesilmek* also means in Turkish turning one's face to whitish due to fright or illness. Both idioms figuratively indicate the frighten state of a person by using the different images. For instance; English idiom uses *ghost with white* to express the state of a person. However, Turkish idiom use literally face with *hydrated lime* which is white and symbolizes scare when used with face in Turkish.

English example:

1- Your kids were white as a ghosts after watching that horror movies.²⁷

²⁰ Nadir Kerime, Kırık Hayat, İnkilâp ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1971, Page, 155.

²¹ Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, Cambridge University Press, 2008, Newyork, Page, 89.

²² Gazioğlu Ahmet C., Kıbrıs'ta Türkler, Kıbrıs Araştırma ve Yayın Merkezi, Lefkoşa, 1994, Page, 79.

²³ Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, Cambridge University Press, 2008, Newyork, Page, 89.

²⁴ Uçkan Banu, Kağnıcıoğlu Deniz, Endüstri İlişkileri, Anadolu Üniversitesi, Eskişehir, 2004, Page, 216.

²⁵ Foreman Steven James, Lammeg's Quest, Page, Lulu. Pub., 2007, Page, 147.

²⁶ Erol Safiye, Mkaleler, Kubbealtı Neşriyat, İstanbul, 2005, Page, 245.

²⁷ Brenner Gail, Webster's New World American Idioms, Wiley publishing, Indianapolis, 2003, Page, 479.

Table shows unlimited/complete similarities

English idiom	Turkish idiom	Turkish Translation into English	Similarity in meaning and images	Similarity in syntactical complex
White as the driven snow	Kar gibi beyaz	White like snow	+	
Black list	Kara liste	Black list	+	+ Adj+N
Black market	Kara borsa	black (stock) market	+	+ Adj+N
Red as a beetroot	Pancar gibi kızarmak	get red as a beetroot	+	
Red faced	Yüzü kızarmak	get one's face red	+	
Give Green light	Yeşil ışık yakmak	Turn on green light	+	

2 – Sonya said as she hung up. When she turned to face us, she was *as white as a ghost*.²⁸

Turkish example:

Yüzü kireç kesildi. O kadar ki arkasındaki kireç rengi duvardan çehresini ayırt edemedim. — Hakkın var, Necip Fazıl, dedi; fakat ben bu makama, daha fazla kötülüğe mâni olmak için katlanıyorum.²⁹

To sum up: The comparison between the two idioms of different languages is really a remarkable work. During comparison two kinds of similarities observed between English and Turkish colour idioms:

- a. limited similarities: which appear in meanings only.
- b. unlimited (complete) similarities: which include meaning, image and syntactical complex.

Actually, observing the similarities between the different languages is not so unusual. Because there are many reasons that build similarities between the idioms of the different cultures. The following reasons may better express the root of similarities:

1 – Since the very beginning of human life on the earth, humankind exchanged their culture and etiquettes in the different stages of life and interacted each other. Language played a central role in

these exchanges and interactions. These relations and interactions between the nations, made idioms to be transferred into the different languages and brought the usage of the same idioms.

2 – There is another reason which based on the psychology and logic of mankind. From the very beginning of human history people accepted good and reacted against the evil altogether. As a result of that they express their feelings by the same logic, images even by the same words.

As a result of that, above mentioned reasons caused either some limited or unlimited similarities between the idioms of different cultures and languages.

For instance, despite different language structures, the following selected English and Turkish colour idioms have unlimited (complete) similarities in meanings, images and even rarely in syntactical complex (Tabl.)

It can be said that majority of English and Turkish idioms take place at the first group of limited similarities.

Finally, it can be said that in accordance with special characteristics of both languages, the similarities between English and Turkish idioms are limited only in meanings. However, occasionally common sense, psychology, logic of both nations, cultural interactions, exchanging the social and scientific experiences, positive and negative historical and economic relations between English speaking nations and Turkish people prepared the ground for further similarities.

²⁸ Nash Eve Mills, Harvey Kenneth J., Little white Squaw, Dundurn Press, Toronto, 2002, Page, 316.

²⁹ Kısakürek Necip Fâzıl, Büyük Doğu Yayınları, İstanbul, 1975, Hitabe, Page, 84.