

**FUNCTIONAL-PRAGMATIC POTENTIAL OF METAPHOR AND CULTURAL
MARKING (CORPUS-BASED ENGLISH-UZBEK COMPARISON).**

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Introduction

Metaphor occupies a central position in modern linguistics, no longer viewed merely as a decorative stylistic device but as a fundamental mechanism of human cognition and communication. Following the ideas of George Lakoff¹ and Mark Johnson², metaphor is understood as a conceptual tool that structures thought and shapes how individuals perceive abstract phenomena such as time, emotion, politics, and social relations. Thus, metaphor plays a crucial role in organizing experience and constructing meaning.

From a functional-pragmatic perspective, metaphor is not only cognitive but also communicative. It influences interpretation, conveys evaluation, and reflects speakers' intentions within specific contexts. Cultural factors further shape metaphorical expressions, as linguistic choices are embedded in national traditions, values, and worldviews. Therefore, meaning construction emerges from the interaction between language, context, and culture.

Corpus-based research enhances the reliability of metaphor studies by providing authentic language data and enabling systematic comparison. A corpus-driven English-Uzbek analysis is particularly significant because it reveals both universal conceptual patterns and culturally marked differences, contributing to intercultural communication, translation studies, and comparative linguistics.

Theoretical Framework

Metaphor has evolved from being viewed as a purely stylistic ornament to being understood as a fundamental cognitive and communicative mechanism. In classical rhetoric, Aristotle³ defined metaphor as a transfer of meaning based on similarity. However, contemporary linguistics, particularly the theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live*

¹ **George P. Lakoff** (/ˈleɪkɒf/; born May 24, 1941) is an American cognitive linguist and philosopher, best known for his thesis that lives of individuals are significantly influenced by the central metaphors they use to explain complex phenomena. <https://george-lakoff.com/author/georgelakoff/>

² **Mark Johnson** is the Knight Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Oregon. He is the author of *The Body in the Mind* and *Moral Imagination*, both published by the University of Chicago Press. Johnson and George Lakoff have also coauthored *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. <https://www.amazon.com/Body-Mind-Bodily-Meaning-Imagination/dp/0226403181>

³ **Aristotle** (born 384 bce, Stagira, Chalcidice, Greece—died 322, Chalcis, Euboea) was an ancient Greek philosopher and scientist, one of the greatest intellectual figures of Classical antiquity and Western history. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>

By⁴, argues that metaphor structures human thought. According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, abstract domains (target domains) are understood through more concrete domains (source domains). For example, the English metaphor **"Time is money"** reflects the conceptual mapping TIME IS A RESOURCE, where time is treated as something valuable and limited. Similarly, in Uzbek, the expression **"Vaqt oltin"** ("Time is gold") reveals a comparable conceptualization, showing a shared cognitive pattern.

From a functional-pragmatic perspective, metaphor performs communicative functions beyond description. Drawing on pragmatic principles associated with John Searle, metaphor contributes to speakers' intentions, persuasion, and evaluation. In English political discourse, expressions like **"We must fight inflation"** activate the conceptual metaphor ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE ENEMIES, creating urgency and emotional engagement. In Uzbek discourse, a similar function appears in phrases such as **"Inqirozga qarshi kurash"** ("struggle against crisis"), where socio-economic challenges are framed as adversaries. These metaphors influence audience perception and construct ideological meaning.

Cultural marking further distinguishes metaphorical systems. While some metaphors are universal (e.g., LIFE IS A JOURNEY: English **"He is at a crossroads"**, Uzbek **"Hayot yo'lida"** – "on the road of life"), others reflect national values. Uzbek metaphors often draw on family and honor concepts, such as **"Yuzim yorug' bo'ldi"** ("My face became bright"), symbolizing social dignity. English metaphors, by contrast, frequently emphasize individual agency, such as **"Climbing the ladder of success."**

Thus, metaphor operates at the intersection of cognition, pragmatics, and culture, and its functional-pragmatic potential becomes especially visible in corpus-based English–Uzbek comparison.

Analysis and Discussion

The corpus analysis demonstrates that metaphor in both English and Uzbek discourse performs significant functional-pragmatic roles, particularly in shaping evaluation, persuasion, and cultural identity. Although many conceptual metaphors appear universal, their pragmatic realization and cultural marking differ across the two languages.

Functional-Pragmatic Potential in English

In the English corpus, metaphors frequently structure political and economic discourse. Expressions such as "economic recovery is gaining momentum" and "the government is battling inflation" reflect the conceptual metaphors ECONOMY IS A MOVING OBJECT and PROBLEMS ARE ENEMIES. These metaphors create a dynamic and urgent frame, encouraging the audience

⁴ **"Metaphors We Live By"** is a 1980 book by American linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. It is considered a seminal work in cognitive linguistics, radically changing the concept of metaphor as a fundamental mechanism of thought, rather than simply a poetic device. <https://george-lakoff.com/books/metaphors-we-live-by/>

to perceive abstract processes as concrete actions. The verb “battle” intensifies emotional engagement and legitimizes strong policy measures.

Similarly, in professional contexts, metaphors like “climbing the corporate ladder” conceptualize career advancement as vertical movement. This metaphor implies competition, hierarchy, and individual achievement, reinforcing cultural values of ambition and self-realization. Pragmatically, such metaphors motivate action and construct success as a measurable upward trajectory.

English discourse also employs emotional metaphors such as “broken heart” or “heated debate,” which map physical states onto emotional experiences. These metaphors make abstract feelings accessible and vivid, increasing expressiveness and empathy in communication.

Functional Pragmatic Potential in Uzbek

In the Uzbek corpus, metaphors also frame socio-political issues as struggles, for example, “inqirozga qarshi kurash” (“struggle against crisis”). Like English, this construction conceptualizes problems as adversaries. However, Uzbek metaphors more frequently incorporate collective and moral values.

For instance, the expression “yuzim yorug‘ bo‘ldi” (“my face became bright”) symbolizes honor and social dignity. Here, brightness metaphorically represents moral purity and social approval. The pragmatic function of this metaphor is evaluative: it reinforces communal norms and emphasizes reputation within society.

Another culturally marked metaphor is “hayot yo‘li” (“the road of life”), which conceptualizes life as a journey. While this metaphor is also common in English, Uzbek usage often highlights destiny, patience, and perseverance, reflecting traditional cultural values.

Comparative Discussion

The comparison reveals both universal and culture-specific patterns. Universal metaphors such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY and PROBLEMS ARE ENEMIES appear in both corpora, suggesting shared cognitive mechanisms. However, differences emerge in pragmatic emphasis. English metaphors tend to foreground individual agency, competition, and progress. Uzbek metaphors more frequently highlight collective responsibility, honor, and social harmony.

Cultural marking is particularly visible in idiomatic expressions that lack direct equivalents. While “climbing the ladder of success” stresses individual upward mobility, Uzbek discourse may emphasize moral growth or family reputation instead of hierarchical advancement. This difference creates challenges in translation, as metaphorical meaning is not purely conceptual but deeply embedded in cultural values.

Overall, the corpus-based analysis confirms that metaphor functions not only as a cognitive device but also as a powerful pragmatic tool shaped by cultural context.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the corpus-based English–Uzbek comparison demonstrates that metaphor possesses strong functional-pragmatic potential. While many conceptual metaphors are universal, their cultural marking shapes evaluative meaning, persuasion, and worldview. Thus, metaphor reflects both shared cognitive patterns and nationally specific values embedded in communicative practice.

References

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