

**THE CONCEPT OF GENERAL AND SPECIFIC METAPHOR: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF METAPHORS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK****Hazratqulova Muborak Rajabovna****University of economics and Pedagogy, English teacher****hzratkulovamuborak@gmail.com**

Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical foundations of metaphor, particularly the concepts of general and specific metaphor, and highlights the comparative features of metaphorical expressions in English and Uzbek. In modern linguistics, metaphor is regarded not only as a stylistic device but also as a conceptual model of human thinking. Based on materials from English and Uzbek, the study reveals both the universal and the national-cultural characteristics of metaphors. In addition, the semantic, cognitive, and linguocultural features of metaphorical units are explained through comparative analysis.

Keywords: metaphor, general metaphor, specific metaphor, conceptual metaphor, comparative linguistics, linguoculture, semantics, cognitive linguistics, English, Uzbek

Introduction

Language is the primary means of expressing human thought, worldview, and culture. Every language reflects reality in its own way, and metaphor occupies a special place in this process of reflection. In traditional linguistics, metaphor was mostly interpreted as a literary or stylistic device, whereas in modern studies it is increasingly viewed as a natural mechanism of human cognition. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphor is not merely a linguistic phenomenon, but a part of the conceptual system that structures how people think, feel, and act in everyday life. According to them, people often understand abstract concepts through concrete experiences.

From this perspective, metaphor serves as an important tool for studying both the universal and national features of human perception of the world. A comparative study of metaphors in English and Uzbek helps not only to identify similarities and differences between the two language systems, but also to reveal the cognitive models, cultural values, and conceptual worldviews of the two peoples. In particular, distinguishing between general and specific metaphors makes it possible to determine which metaphors are based on universal patterns of human cognition and which are rooted in the national experience of a particular people.

The purpose of this article is to clarify the concepts of general and specific metaphor theoretically and to provide a comparative analysis of metaphorical expressions in English and Uzbek.

The Concept of Metaphor and Its Theoretical Foundations

Metaphor is one of the most complex and multifaceted concepts in linguistics. Derived from the Greek word *metaphora*, the term means “transfer” or “carrying over.” According to the classical approach, metaphor is the transfer of the name of one object or phenomenon to another on the basis of similarity. Richards (1936) explains metaphor as a relationship between two components: the principal concept and the image used to express it. His approach laid the foundation for viewing metaphor not merely as an ornament, but as a mechanism for meaning construction.

Black (1962) proposed the interaction theory of metaphor, emphasizing that metaphor is not simply a matter of similarity between two concepts, but a device that creates a new semantic relationship between them. This view highlights the active role of metaphor in meaning-making. Later, within the framework of cognitive linguistics, metaphor came to be interpreted even more deeply. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1993), metaphor is a way of understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another. In this process, there is a correspondence between a “source domain” and a “target domain.”

For example, in the English expression “*Life is a journey*,” “journey” serves as the source domain and “life” as the target domain. Similarly, Uzbek expressions such as *hayot yo'li* (“the path of life”), *to'g'ri yo'ldan adashmoq* (“to stray from the right path”), and *maqsad sari yo'l olmoq* (“to move toward one’s goal”) are based on the same conceptual model. Kövecses (2002) considers metaphor to be a natural part of everyday thought and emphasizes its direct connection with human experience.

Thus, in contemporary linguistics, metaphor is interpreted not only as a stylistic phenomenon, but also as a semantic, cognitive, and linguocultural one. Therefore, comparative and cultural approaches are especially important in its study.

The Concept of General Metaphor

A general metaphor refers to metaphorical models found across different languages and cultures and based on shared human physical, emotional, and social experience. Such metaphors are formed on the basis of the human body, movement, space, warmth, light, weight, paths, and other everyday experiences. Kövecses (2005) notes that a large proportion of metaphors are

grounded in the universal nature of human experience, and their occurrence in similar forms across languages serves as evidence of this universality.

For example, in English expressions such as “*bright idea*” and “*bright student*,” intelligence and understanding are explained through the concept of light. In Uzbek, there are similar expressions such as *aql nuri* (“the light of intellect”), *fikri ravshan* (“clear thinking”), and *ko‘ngli yorug‘* (“bright-hearted”). Here, we can observe such general metaphorical models as **INTELLIGENCE IS LIGHT** or **KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT**. Since in human experience light is associated with vision, understanding, and clarity, this metaphor has developed in similar ways across different languages.

Likewise, the expression of emotions through temperature also belongs to the category of general metaphors. English expressions such as “*warm person*” and “*cold attitude*” are very close to Uzbek expressions like *iliq munosabat* (“warm attitude”), *sovuq qarash* (“cold look”), and *qalbi issiq odam* (“a warm-hearted person”). Gibbs (1994) explains such metaphors through the close relationship between emotional experience and physical sensation. Thus, metaphorical models such as **AFFECTION IS WARMTH** and **INDIFFERENCE IS COLDNESS** are among the universal patterns of human cognition.

Time-related metaphors also have a general character. In English, expressions such as “*spend time*,” “*save time*,” and “*waste time*” are widely used. In Uzbek, similar expressions include *vaqtini sarflamoq* (“to spend time”), *vaqtini tejamoq* (“to save time”), and *vaqtini boy bermoq* (“to lose time”). In this case, the metaphor **TIME IS A VALUABLE RESOURCE** or **TIME IS WEALTH** emerges. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe such metaphors as conceptual models related to human economic and social activity.

The understanding of life as a path is another universal metaphor. English expressions such as “*at a crossroads in life*,” “*come a long way*,” and “*lose one’s way*” are semantically very close to Uzbek expressions like *hayot yo‘li* (“the path of life”), *yo‘lini topmoq* (“to find one’s way”), and *to‘g‘ri yo‘ldan adashmoq* (“to stray from the right path”). Here, the metaphor **LIFE IS A JOURNEY** becomes evident. Therefore, general metaphors are formed on the basis of shared human experience and serve as an important source of cross-linguistic similarity.

The Concept of Specific Metaphor

A specific metaphor, by contrast, refers to metaphorical units that are closely connected with a particular language, culture, people’s historical experience, lifestyle, and mentality. Such metaphors reflect national worldview and linguocultural features more than general human experience. Maslova (2001) points out that linguocultural units reflect a people’s historical

memory and system of values. In this sense, specific metaphors are among the most important indicators of national mentality.

Many metaphors in Uzbek are connected with the people's socio-moral values, family-centered way of life, and Eastern communicative culture. For example, expressions such as *ko'ngli tog'day* ("one's heart is like a mountain"), *ko'ngliga qil sig'maydi* ("unable to tolerate even a hair's worth"), *yuragi keng* ("broad-hearted"), *yuziga oyoq qo'ymoq* ("to humiliate someone deeply"), and *ko'ngli yarimta* ("half-hearted" or "emotionally incomplete") demonstrate the figurative richness of Uzbek and its national cognitive patterns. In particular, the concept of *ko'ngil* has an extremely rich metaphorical potential in Uzbek. Mahmudov (2010) emphasizes that the semantic subtlety and layers of meaning in Uzbek are closely linked to the spiritual world of the people. Indeed, the notion of *ko'ngil* in Uzbek encompasses several dimensions simultaneously, including heart, intention, inner state, emotion, and spiritual sensitivity.

In English, however, certain metaphors are more closely associated with Western social experience, individualism, rationality, and the worldview of an industrialized society. Expressions such as "*climb the social ladder*," "*time is money*," "*target audience*," and "*win an argument*" link success, time, and communication with competition, economy, and strategy. Charteris-Black (2004) argues that metaphors function as carriers of social and ideological meaning and reflect dominant perspectives within society. For this reason, many metaphors in English are closely connected with a mindset oriented toward social competition and achievement.

Animal-based metaphors may also carry a specific cultural character. In English, "*fox*" may signify cunning, "*owl*" wisdom, and "*shark*" ruthlessness or aggressiveness. In Uzbek, *tulki* ("fox") symbolizes cunning, *bo'ri* ("wolf") evil or strength, *ot* ("horse") bravery and movement, and *eshak* ("donkey") stubbornness or foolishness. These similarities and differences reflect the historical experience of each people with nature, animals, and symbolic representation.

Thus, specific metaphors shape the national-cultural image of a language and help us understand a people's worldview more deeply.

Comparative Features of Metaphors in English and Uzbek

A comparison of metaphors in English and Uzbek shows that metaphor is widely and actively used in both languages; however, their conceptual centers, semantic load, and cultural foundations are not always identical. Croft and Cruse (2004) emphasize that in comparative linguistic study, it is important to analyze conceptual structures. Metaphors are among the most effective means of revealing such structures.

First of all, both languages show a tendency to express emotions and mental states through physical experience. English expressions such as “*heavy heart*,” “*cold response*,” and “*warm smile*” are semantically very close to Uzbek expressions like *yuragi ezildi* (“his/her heart ached”), *sovuq munosabat* (“cold attitude”), and *iliq tabassum* (“warm smile”). This indicates that a large number of metaphors are grounded in bodily experience.

However, some metaphorical centers are structured differently in the two languages. In English, units such as *mind*, *head*, *heart*, *face*, and *eye* have broad metaphorical potential, whereas in Uzbek, *ko'ngil*, *yurak*, *ko'z*, *yuz*, *til*, *bel*, and *bosh* are actively used. In particular, the concept of *ko'ngil* occupies a highly central place in Uzbek. English does not have a single word that fully corresponds to it. Some aspects of *ko'ngil* are conveyed through words such as *heart*, *soul*, *feeling*, *mood*, and *desire*. This demonstrates the uniqueness of the metaphorical system of Uzbek.

Nature-based metaphors are also significant from a comparative point of view. In Uzbek, expressions such as *yuzidan nur yog'iladi* (“light radiates from the face”), *bahordek ochildi* (“opened up like spring”), *ko'ngli gulday* (“heart like a flower”), and *tog'dek suyanmoq* (“to rely on someone like a mountain”) are widely used. In English, we encounter expressions such as “*ray of hope*,” “*storm of emotions*,” “*frozen smile*,” and “*blooming youth*.” In both languages, nature imagery functions as an active means of expressing emotional and abstract states. Semino (2008), in discussing the discourse function of metaphor, notes that metaphor enables complex emotional or social conditions to be communicated in a simple and expressive way through a particular image.

In addition, in English, debate and communication are often metaphorized through war or sport. Expressions such as “*defend your position*,” “*attack an argument*,” and “*win a debate*” illustrate the metaphor **ARGUMENT IS WAR**. Although Uzbek also has expressions such as *fikrini himoya qilmoq* (“to defend one’s opinion”) and *keskin hujum qilmoq* (“to launch a sharp attack”), their frequency and stylistic tone in everyday speech may differ somewhat. This difference is related to the communicative style and cultural norms of the two languages.

Thus, metaphors in English and Uzbek are based, on the one hand, on general cognitive models, and on the other hand, they clearly reflect national-cultural characteristics. These two layers — universality and cultural specificity — form the central issue in the comparative study of metaphors.

The Importance of General and Specific Metaphors in Translation and Language Learning

Distinguishing between general and specific metaphors is also important for translation studies and foreign language teaching. Newmark (1988) emphasizes that in translating metaphor, it is necessary to take into account not only lexical equivalence but also cultural and conceptual equivalence. Indeed, general metaphors are relatively easier to translate because they often exist in both languages. For example, “*warm relationship*” can easily be translated as *iliq munosabat*, and “*lose one’s way*” as *yo‘lini yo‘qotmoq*.

However, translating specific metaphors is much more complicated. For example, Uzbek expressions such as *ko‘ngliga qil sig‘maydi* or *yuzi yorug‘* cannot be translated literally into English without losing much of their meaning. In such cases, the translator often has to use a cultural equivalent or an explanatory translation strategy. Therefore, the comparative study of metaphors contributes to improving translation quality.

From the perspective of language teaching, the study of metaphors is equally important. Safarov (2006) notes that within cognitive linguistics, explaining language units in relation to human thought helps learners understand language more deeply. Indeed, a foreign language learner must understand not only grammar and vocabulary, but also the figurative patterns through which speakers conceptualize the world. In particular, understanding specific metaphors plays a major role in developing communicative and cultural competence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, metaphor is one of the most important phenomena linking language and thought. It is not only a stylistic device, but also a way in which human beings understand and categorize reality. In modern linguistics, metaphor is viewed as a semantic, cognitive, and linguocultural phenomenon. The works of scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Kövecses (2002, 2005), Gibbs (1994), Black (1962), and Semino (2008) have scientifically demonstrated the central role of metaphor in human cognition.

The analysis has shown that general metaphors are based on shared human physical, psychological, and cognitive experience and appear in similar forms in both English and Uzbek. Specific metaphors, however, are linked to the culture, mentality, lifestyle, and historical experience of a particular people, thereby expressing the national uniqueness of a language. In particular, concepts such as *ko‘ngil*, *yuz*, and *yurak* in Uzbek, as well as metaphorical centers such as *time*, *mind*, *battle*, and *ladder* in English, reveal the distinctive conceptual worldview of each language.

Therefore, the comparative study of general and specific metaphors has important theoretical and practical significance for linguistics, translation studies, linguocultural studies, and foreign

language teaching. Research in this field contributes to a deeper understanding of both the universal and the national layers of human cognition.

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