



A COGNITIVE AND PRAGMATIC COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE MEANING IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract. *This article deals with the issues based on the activation of figurative meanings in English and Uzbek through a cognitive and pragmatic comparative framework. Figurative language, especially metaphor and metonymy, increasingly replaces literal meanings in everyday communication, literature, media, and educational discourse. The study explores how conceptual mappings and pragmatic inferencing motivate such semantic shifts. Drawing on cognitive metaphor theory and discourse pragmatics, the paper analyzes cross-linguistic similarities and differences in meaning extension, pragmatic motivation, and emotional expressiveness.*

Keywords: *Figurative meaning, conceptual metaphor, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, semantic shift, discourse analysis, English–Uzbek comparison, expressiveness.*

Introduction

The phenomenon of figurative meaning has long been central to linguistic study, as it represents one of the most productive mechanisms through which languages expand semantic capacity and convey emotional, evaluative, and imaginative content. Modern communication reveals a noticeable tendency for figurative meanings to become increasingly activated and even dominant over literal senses in daily speech, journalism, digital media, and literary discourse. Expressions such as *cold heart*, *bright future*, or *time is money* in English and *sovuq qalb*, *porloq kelajak*, or *vaqt oltin* in Uzbek demonstrate how metaphoric interpretations are often perceived as more communicatively powerful than literal meanings.

The collaboration of cognitive and pragmatic approaches therefore enables a comprehensive understanding of how figurative meanings become dominant in discourse.

In English and Uzbek, figurative semantics evolve under distinct historical, cultural, and stylistic traditions, yet they share universal mechanisms of meaning extension. English has developed a highly conventionalized lexicon of metaphors embedded in everyday speech, while Uzbek discourse often preserves vivid imagery connected with cultural symbolism, collective memory, and emotional expressiveness. In both languages, however, contextual expectations regularly override literal meanings, creating a communicative environment where figurative interpretation is primary and automatic.



Literature Review

Research on figurative meaning has steadily expanded with the rise of cognitive linguistic theory. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) pioneering work established metaphors as conceptual, not merely stylistic phenomena, asserting that everyday thought is metaphorically structured. Their framework has inspired numerous cross-linguistic investigations into figurative language patterns and activation mechanisms (Kövecses, 2010). According to Kövecses (2010), while metaphoric systems are rooted in shared human cognition, cultural factors strongly influence metaphor selection and conventionalization in specific languages.

Pragmatic approaches further emphasize the role of communicative intention and conversational context in activating figurative meaning. Grice's (1975) cooperative principle explains how metaphor and idiomatic usage emerge when speakers intentionally flout literal maxims to convey implicit meanings. Levinson (1983) expanded this notion by arguing that pragmatic inferencing enables interlocutors to process figurative meanings almost automatically through shared background knowledge. These insights support the view that meaning activation is not linguistically encoded alone but emerges dynamically in discourse interaction.

Studies on English figurative language reveal extensive lexicalization of metaphors. Charteris-Black (2004) demonstrated how political discourse employs conventional metaphors to shape ideological persuasion, transforming figurative language into rhetorical norms rather than stylistic exceptions. Similarly, Gibbs (2008) showed that English speakers mentally process metaphors as rapidly as literal language due to habitual exposure and cognitive entrenchment.

Within Turkic language research, Uzbek figurative semantics has received growing scholarly attention. Yuldashev (2018) investigated metaphorical conceptualization in Uzbek poetic texts, illustrating how figurative expressions preserve culturally grounded symbolic imagery, particularly relating to emotions, morality, and nature. According to Abdullaeva (2021), Uzbek daily discourse tends to maintain emotionally charged figurative expressions that mirror collective cultural values rather than purely lexicalized convention. These findings indicate that Uzbek speakers rely more heavily on pragmatic contextualization to interpret figurative meanings.

Comparative analysis shows that the activation of figurative meaning in both English and Uzbek arises primarily from conceptual metaphorical mapping. Abstract notions such as emotions, time, and morality are framed through concrete experiences: *love as warmth*, *time as a resource*, or *goodness as light*. This cognition-driven process facilitates rapid comprehension and strong emotional resonance. In both languages, the figurative meaning often eclipses the literal sense as speakers rely on entrenched metaphoric frames during discourse production and interpretation.



Pragmatically, figurative activation fulfills communicative aims related to intensity, politeness, and persuasion. In English, metaphors commonly function as rhetorical devices enhancing persuasive discourse, particularly in media and political communication (Charteris-Black, 2004). For instance, phrases like *economic storm* or *battle against poverty* utilize war or disaster metaphors to mobilize emotional responses. Uzbek pragmatics displays similar motivational functions, yet integrates culturally resonant imagery such as agricultural metaphors (*mehnat mevasini ko'rmoq* – to see the fruits of labor) or spirituality-oriented expressions (*ko'ngli yorishdi* – the heart brightened).

Cognitively, both linguistic communities rely on shared patterns of embodiment: physical experiences such as heat, movement, or spatial orientation function as basic metaphor sources. Yet cultural contexts determine which bodily experiences gain discourse prominence. English metaphor strongly privileges objectification (*ideas as products, time as money*), while Uzbek imagery emphasizes relational harmony and spirituality.

English literature extensively employs figurative language to deepen emotional and philosophical meaning. In Shakespeare's works, metaphors regularly substitute literal description, as in "*All the world's a stage*," which frames life through theatrical imagery. This metaphorical mapping transforms ordinary existence into an aesthetic performance, foregrounding the figurative over literal meaning. Similarly, in Dickens' novels, expressions such as "*the iron hand of poverty*" activate emotional associations through tactile imagery, intensifying symbolic representation.

Modern literature continues this practice. Orwell's metaphorical framing of political oppression in *Animal Farm* turns animals into figurative stand-ins for social classes, demonstrating metaphor's capacity to dominate literal narrative interpretation. Readers focus primarily on symbolic meaning rather than zoological details, evidencing full figurative activation.

Uzbek literature likewise showcases intense figurative dynamics. Abdulla Qahhor often employs emotional metaphors depicting psychological tension, for example, phrases translating to "*his heart burned with regret*," which replaces literal emotion description with bodily sensation imagery. O'tkir Hoshimov's prose frequently uses metaphorical constructions to highlight moral depth: expressions like "*so'zi yurakka o'qday tegdi*" ("his words struck the heart like an arrow") activate violent imagery to convey emotional pain.

Poetry further amplifies figurative dominance. Erkin Vohidov employs recurrent light and warmth metaphors to represent hope and national identity, transforming natural imagery into sociocultural symbolism. Abstract values thus become aesthetic constructs shaped by metaphorical perception rather than literal explanation.

Comparatively, English literary metaphors often serve allegorical or ideological purposes, while Uzbek metaphors prioritize emotional authenticity and ethical nuance.



Despite stylistic differences, both traditions demonstrate how figurative meanings replace direct description to create narrative depth. In literature, figurative meanings achieve complete activation, becoming the primary interpretive framework for narrative understanding.

Conclusion. The comparative investigation reveals that activation of figurative meaning in English and Uzbek discourse stems from universal cognitive metaphor mechanisms complemented by culture-specific pragmatic strategies. Figurative meanings increasingly overshadow literal interpretations due to their communicative efficiency, emotional intensity, and symbolic explanatory power. English discourse exhibits higher lexical conventionalization of metaphors, enabling automatic processing, whereas Uzbek preserves stronger contextual creativity and emotional richness within figurative constructions. Literature in both cultures illustrates maximal activation, where metaphor becomes the dominant narrative code rather than supplementary ornamentation.

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